

TRAIN LIKE A GEEK RUN LIKE A ROBOT

Stuff

WHAT'S NEXT



SONY XPERIA X
There's a new smartphone in town

FIT TECH

WE'RE GOING TO UPGRADE YOU

FEEL THE BURN!

Street Fighter V
Aerial robot wars
Teach yourself guitar
iPhone 7 headphones
Tag Heuer smartwatch tested

WIN!
A 3-MONTH
beIN
SUBSCRIPTION

p25

March 2016

Middle East Edition
A Motivate Publication

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WELCOME



At the beginning of the 19th century, the greatest boxer in England was a man from Bristol by the name of Tom Cribb.

Tom trained by delivering coal all day and then, when he finished work, he'd go to the nearest forest and punch the bark off a tree. Probably not all of it - he'd have a tough time trying to punch some of the smaller branches - but still, he could beat up a tree. Not a lot of people, I'd wager, can claim to do that. At the very least, you certainly don't want to mess with a man who can beat up a tree.

But do you need to beat up a tree? I would argue that you don't. In fact, if there's one piece of advice you should take from this magazine, it's that you shouldn't attack a tree with your bare hands. Because while Cribb was whaling on the nearest oak with his massive fists, everyone else would spend five minutes working out with an axe and go home with their evening's firewood. These days thanks to technology, exercise doesn't need to be painful, and bonkers. With the right kit and a clever approach, it can even actually be fun. Gyms can be cool, bike rides can be exhilarating, and you can even shed some kilos playing video games.

So that's what you'll get from this issue: tech that will turn your next workout from a sweaty, exhausting chore, into something you actually look forward to doing. Flip to p27 to find out how you can get fit without harming a single bit of plant life. Of course, the irony that this magazine is printed on dead trees hasn't escaped us. Enjoy the mag. 

Mike Priest, Editor / [@MikePriest](mailto:mike@motivate.ae)



THIS MONTH IN STUFF'S DIGITAL EDITION

- Expert digital reviews on all of the reviews inside this magazine
- All-new features and tests designed just for iPad
- Stunning hi-res photos of the hottest tech
- Spiritual fulfilment



WHAT'S HAPPENING ONLINE?

- Up to the minute news and views on everything from Apple to Adidas
- Exclusive video reviews, previews, trailers and gadget challenges
- More games! The latest titles reviewed in full, with in-game galleries and more

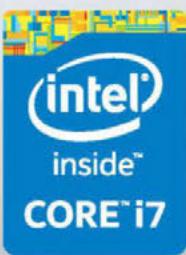
Dell recommends Windows.



It leaves room for everything except the competition.

Sure, being the world's smallest 13" laptop looks impressive, but its size is just the beginning. With the world's first virtually borderless infinity display, available with UltraSharp™ QHD+ resolution, configured using an Intel® Core™ i7 processor, Windows 8.1, up to 15 hours of battery life* and built with carbon fiber and machined aluminum, the new XPS 13 is amazing both inside and out. Which is great news for everybody — unless you're the competition.

The new Dell XPS 13. Better by any measure.



*Battery Life based on BrowsingBench test run by Dell in November, 2014. Visit www.eembc.org for more information. System had 150-nits (40%) brightness, WiFi on, 4GB memory, Intel® HD 5500 graphics, Intel® Core™ i5 processor, 128GB SSD and FHD display. Test results should be used only to compare one product to another and are not a guarantee you will get the same battery life, which may be significantly less than test results and varies depending on product configuration, software, usage, operating conditions, power management settings and other factors. Maximum battery life decreases with time and use. Dell XPS 13 is a trademark of Dell Inc. Intel, the Intel Logo, Intel Inside, Intel Core, and Core Inside are trademarks of Intel Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries. Dell, the Dell logo and the Dell badge are trademarks of Dell Inc. ©2014 Dell Inc. All rights reserved.

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You don't need a library of high-res audio to enjoy superb sound... but you do need a DAC
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 - Take a virtual reality photo ● Get bargain zonal heating ● Become a streaming genius

WIN!
p25



TOP 10 OF EVERYTHING

Looking to buy something but need a bit of advice? Turn to our Stuff Top 10s: our expert listings of all gadgetry, from p66

TABLETS



Apple iPad Air 2
★★★★★
King of the slates
p67

SLRs



Fujifilm X-T10
★★★★★
A snapper for all seasons
p72

OUR PRICES

Prices in Hot Stuff are RRP. Prices in features, tests and Top 10s are the best we could find from a reputable online retailer at the time of going to print.

HOT SPOT

The X capture

Unlike other phone-makers, Sony has a powerful camera department to steal tech from – tech like the Xperia X's Predictive Hybrid Autofocus, which locks on and tracks objects, keeping them sharp.



FRI 05 JUN

SO MOBILE
10
35



UFF

15 PAGES
OF THE BIGGEST
STORIES FROM
PLANET TECH



X be friends
While the Xperia Z phones have been tasty but a trifle, er, square, the X has a friendlier design with a one-piece metal body, curved glass edges and a thumb-friendly five-inch display.

HOT
THREE
#1

X MARKS THE SHOT Sony Xperia X

Remember the old days, when you used your phone for talking? If you wanted to pass on some information you'd have to place a call, hope the other person was available to answer it, and say words: "I'm on a horse" or "Brian's got lost in Homebase". You don't have to do that now, because you can just send them a picture of a horse, or Homebase, or that emoji that looks exactly like Brian. A lot of this is thanks to Sony. Chances are you already take most of your pictures using a Sony camera, whether you know it or not; most major smartphones use Sony's camera tech. Analysts estimate that Sony makes \$20 on every iPhone sold, because it makes the camera sensors. So, when Sony says it has made the smartest, fastest phone camera ever – exactly the claim it's making about the Xperia X – there's a good chance there's something in it.

As hot as... a seamless metal one-piece
US\$169 / sonymobile.com

HOT
THREE
#2WATER YOU
WORRIED ABOUT?
LEICA X-U

The latest government figures show that approximately 85% of Leica owners haven't actually unboxed, so great is their fear of damage. The idea, therefore, of taking their shiny super-camera to the beach, or in a boat, would be enough to reduce most to a quiver too pronounced for any image stabilisation tech. And yet, that is exactly the environment in which this new Leica should excel – it's their first waterproof camera. Depths of up to 15m can be withstood, along with a certain amount of shock and, presumably, any depth of dust. It has a fixed 23mm, f/1.7 lens behind which is a 16.2MP APS-C CMOS sensor; there are underwater modes for stills or Full HD video. Anyone with US\$2950 to spend will surely pay the extra US\$50 for a floating strap.

As hot as... a Bentley Bentayga dirt rally
US\$2950 / leica-camera.com



OTHER 2016 WRIST-BASED MARVELS

Panerai Lo Scienziato Luminor 1950 Tourbillon GMT

Direct laser sintering is the 3D printing tech used to make bike parts and guns. But also to make a light weight mechanical watch.

US\$1ba / panerai.com

**Bell & Ross BR-03 Desert Type**

A recognisable design that often gets relaunched, but we love the Desert Type's new layered design, wherein the markers are cut out of the dial.

US\$1ba / bellross.com

**A. Lange & Söhne Datograph Perpetual Tourbillon**

A beautiful combo of tourbillon timekeeping with an accurate chronograph, perpetual calendar and moon phase indicator.

€295,000 / alange-soehne.com



HOT
THREE
#3

**PEEK-A-BOO
MOVEMENT**
**HUBLOT MP-05
LAFERRARI SAPPHIRE**

If you weren't already, peer closely at this watch. Closer. Come on, no-one's watching you; they're all staring at their phones. What do you see? That's right: nothing. The entire case is made of clear sapphire crystal. Seven pieces in total, requiring over 600 hours of machining. Though this LaFerrari Sapphire will be launched at this year's Baselworld show, it's not the first time we've seen the LaFerrari movement – designed to mimic a Ferrari engine – but it is the first time we've seen it in all its glory, in a sapphire case. As before, the mechanism is capable of an amazing 50 days of power... but only after you've wound it using a special drill. Now, it's probably best if you move the magazine back to a more normal position.

A shot as... Sebastian Vettel's timing belt
US\$575,000 / hublot.com



FASTER THAN A SPEEDING EYEBALL

Sony a6300

US\$1150 / sony.com



The super-fast autofocus speed makes the Sony a6300 ideal for capturing sport.

You barely notice a second's passing. But in that moment, this Sony has refocused 10 times.

● **Festival of speed**

Even knowing that this is a compact system camera, and so doesn't have a physical mirror to move like a digital SLR, the a6300's 0.05sec autofocus time is a marvel. Coupled with 425 phase detection points (read: lots), it can track fast-moving objects quicker than you can comprehend.

● **The back story**

Yes, sorry. We got a bit excited about the figures. The Sony a6300

is an update to the a6000, which was itself a speedy machine. They are mirrorless interchangeable-lens cameras, also known as compact system cameras – nobody's nailed a snappy name for them yet. It sits in the Sony range in between the likes of the supercharged compact, the RX100 IV, and its DSLR Alpha chunkers, some of which use the same 'E-mount' lenses. Still here?

● **Back to the fun stuff**

Good. The a6300 has a 24.2MP APS-C sensor and a rakish BIONZ X processor that's responsible for those awesome autofocus speeds and a 11fps continuous shooting speed. It isn't huge, but bigger than

a compact, and one advantage of that is a decent viewfinder: a 2.4million-dot OLED, 120Hz eye-burner that Sony's waggishly called the 'Tru-finder'. The rear LCD is tilty, but not touchy.

● **Sony pictures**

Movies come in super-tasty 4K size, and there's a variety of formats and frame rates to suit your oeuvre, including 120fps 1080p slo-mo. There's a new mic input slot, and something called S-log3 gamma curve that is only comprehensible by paid-up beret-wearing wannabe DOPs. Anyway, it's to do with awesome dynamic range for your movies.

THIS IS THE WORLD'S FASTEST COMPACT SYSTEM CAMERA



MEANWHILE, OVER IN CANON CORNER...

● EOS 80D

The EOS 80D arrives to temporarily pause the excited chatter of Canon fans. Evolutionary, not revolutionary, but a new 24.2MP CMOS sensor, DIGIC 6 processor and 45-point AF should be enough to restart the chat.

[US\\$799 / canon.com](#)

● Power Zoom Adaptor

The new EOS also ups its video ante with a new 1080p/60fps ability. To make the most of that, you might want this remote-controllable accessory that does the zooming better than you, sausage fingers.

[US\\$150 / canon.com](#)

● PowerShot G7 X Mark II & SX720 HS

Two compact crowdpleasers: an updated 1in-sensor G7 X (pictured), which gets a substantial RAW shooting speed boost from its DIGIC 7 processor; and the SX720 HS, a 40x optical zoomer that girths at just 35.6mm.

[US\\$799 / canon.com](#)



ALTERNATIVELY...

UMi Touch

Chinese margin-buster UMi has announced the Touch: a 5.5in, 1080p-screened octa-core Android phone for US\$180.

Great exspecklations HTC DESIRE 530

For some people it's desperately important to have a phone with no less than 20 megapixels in the camera, eight cores in the processor and a screen made from pixels so tiny they're physically impossible. And for some people, a nice case will do the trick. The new Desire uses a production process that puts a different pattern of dots on every single phone, making it effectively unique, like a snowflake. And, like a snowflake, it has modest specs – a 720p screen, 1.1GHz processor and 16GB storage (plus microSD) – and it should cost you comfortably under US\$300.

[US\\$299 / htc.com](#)



What new valve amp, dear?

QUAD VA-ONE

Which came first: the market for expensive watches, or the desire to collect something small enough to be hidden from one's partner? We think we know, and it's a problem that affects lovers of big stuff, such as cars, bikes... and hi-fi. Most valve amplifiers – beautiful, warm, living, breathing valve amplifiers – are hulking great things that you can't hide unless you live in a warehouse. The Quad VA-One is just 180x335mm. You could probably squirrel it away in a sock drawer, with your watches. It's got Bluetooth, which will help, although you'll still have to explain the dangling speaker wires. Not to mention the heat.

[US\\$1950 / quad-hifi.co.uk](#)

START MENU

The latest startups, crowdfunded projects and plain crazy ideas



Robot Wars starter set **SUMO BOY**

Robot Wars is coming back! The BBC is reactivating the RC battle-bot show and, although not much is known except that Dara O Briain's presenting, we're all excited. Not least because it might save a generation of young roboteers the cost of drone racing – they can compete using more affordable land-based robots. Alternatively, try Robot Sumo, an established international league, with this Arduino-based standardised kit. Victory will come from skill in building and programming. And psyching out opponents with team bomber jackets, if Robot Wars was anything to go by. Activate!

£199 / sumo-boy.com



Fahrenheit from far **FLO THERMOMETER**

The classic truant's ruse of popping the are-you-really-ill thermometer into a cup of tea before handing it back to Mum will be 'disrupted' by this app-connected IR thermometer, which reads temperature from 1cm away. This also means it'll read a temperature without needing to wake a tired infant.

US\$22 / zeraph.co



Rad catcher **NEXGEAR FRODO**

Mumbai-based NexGear is on an adventurous path, launching a 1080p action camera into an unsteady marketplace – GoPro has just slashed its range of cameras. But the Frodo looks innovative, from its hinged watch strap option (standard head/bike mounts too) to its auto-editing smartphone app and integrated fitness tracking.

£199 / frodocam.com



Wire you not backing up? **MEEM MEMORY CABLE**

You know that charging cable for your phone? Like, totally old-school, bro. We're all running these Meem cables that mirror all your phone data – while charging – to their 16GB or 32GB memory blob. For why? For backup! For when you drop your phone in the toilet. Too late then, bro. Be like us.

£40 / meemmemory.com



You put your flat phone in... **DE RIGUEUR CONNECTED SLEEVE**

Many reasons to enjoy this campaign. Firstly, the tortuous URL, of which we've never seen the like. But mainly because it's an external battery that can wirelessly charge your phone and can itself be wirelessly charged. That URL, though....

£250 / therconnectedsleeve.by.derigueur.fr



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WINDSPEED SKYDECK

Whether you have your own plane or are flying in the upper echelons of commercial airlines, the world of aerial oneupmanship is getting heated. Private suites, bathtubs, gyms – space is king.

And as space goes, few things can be as expansive as this SkyDeck concept, from Washington state's Windspeed Technologies: a single or twin seat that elevates you into

your own glass turret, placed in an aerodynamically neutral position just forward of the tail. From which you can see... well, clouds. But that's not the point, is it? The point is that, while the other flyers might boast of luxurious interiors, your opulence is there on the outside for all to see.

Mind you, were easyJet to install these on its Ibiza fleet, there'd be no shortage of drunken punters willing to front up US\$50 a go.





NEWSFEED

**FORD GEARS UP FOR SNOW-TOMY**

Ford has announced a major push in self-driving car development. It has tripled its autonomous testing fleet, and revealed a system that can deal with snow – and, it hopes, won't be flummoxed by road signs being obscured in bad weather.

**CHROMECAST GOES MULTIROOM**

"It's not as good as a Sonos," said some people when Google announced its US\$40 Chromecast Audio. In response, Google has updated the tiny music streamer so several can be joined into a Sonos-style multiroom setup, and added high-res audio too.

**E INK I SEE A BUS**

Transport for London has introduced a trial of E Ink bus signs in central London, able to display more dynamic information than just timetables. By bus o'clock your phone battery is normally flat, so this app-surfacing system will be a useful for those whose human battery is also dead.

BENQ WIT

US\$220 / wit-lighting.com

**Iconic lamps, there are a lot.
This, iconic? Surely not.**

You've been at the Dr Seuss again, haven't you? Well, he wouldn't approve of your negative attitude. Do you not marvel at its peculiar shape? Does not the promise of technological treats cause a-rumblings in your tumblings? Smell that innovation!

All I can smell is puff. Of the facts, there are not enough.

Right. You only have to look at the smears of make-up on any lamppost to realise that we are spending more and more time looking at our gadgets. Given that we used to be encouraged to take regular breaks from screens during working hours, this 24-hour artificial light burn is causing concern.

And rightly so: your peepers are keepers.

Truth dat. Try as they might, eye doctors offer no transplants nor returns yet. Unfrown yourself, though, because the light doctors at BenQ have got you. The WIT is described as the 'first e-reading lamp', born out of a claimed 1800 hours of design research. Its LED lighting adjusts its brightness automagically to suit the room's ambience, and its curiously curved 'smile' arm is shaped so as to throw light uniformly across your desk. Whoomf.

Whoomf?

That's the noise light makes, being thrown uniformly across a desk. But have you noticed the dial on top of the WIT? (We're electing to pronounce it 'vit', Europeanly.) That is a colour temperature dial, allowing you to manually adjust the light from a cool, spreadsheet-nailing 5700k to a warm, huggy, Kindle-and-cuppa 2700k. Yeah, we can see you, frowning at your stuck-in-its-ways desk lamp...

1800 HOURS
OF DESIGN
RESEARCH HAVE
GONE INTO MAKING
THE WORLD'S FIRST
E-READING LAMP





Rapid Canon fire
CANON EOS-1D X MARK II

We've put Canon back on our pull-out-of-a-fire list. There are some counter-cultural elements to its new flagship that have re-endearred it to us. For one, there's touchscreen capability to the 1.62million-dot rear LCD, but it's strictly limited to focusing. Everything else is accessed by physical controls, as befits a pro DSLR. The EOS-1D X also has a remarkable maximum shooting speed of 14fps, which demanded a new battery, the LP-E19. (It will still take an older battery, with only the loss of a few fps.) Ditto, the last-gen CF card slot next to the snazzy CFast slot. As you'd expect, there are a bazillion other specs to this pro-level cam – 4K video, natch – which you can find on Stuff.tv/me

US\$6000 (body only) / canon.com

MEANWHILE, IN THE GYM...



MyZone Sports Bra
MyZone's gamified workout system gets an easy-on option. Sensor-integrated clothing is a 2016 trend, mark ye.
US\$70 / myzone.org



Light in weight, heavy on style
FITBIT ALTA

Hot on the heels – and none too shabby on the wrist – of the Fitbit Blaze smartwatch, the Alta is a simpler, subtler alternative that's being marketed at women. It'll measure activity and sleep, and display time and basic notifications on its monochrome OLED screen. No buttons; you tap to get its attention. Five-day battery life is one advantage of this minimalist build; affordability is the other. We like the look of the Blaze, but the Alta – with its rubber, leather or metal straps – is more likely to be aesthetically acceptable. Rivals? Probably the Misfit Ray, if you're looking for light style, or the Withings Go for its eight-month battery.

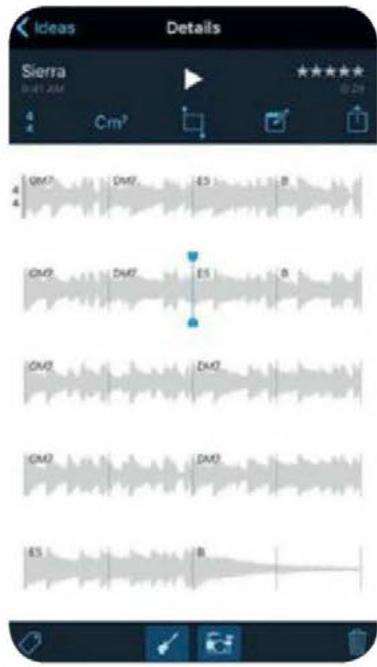
US\$130 / fitbit.com

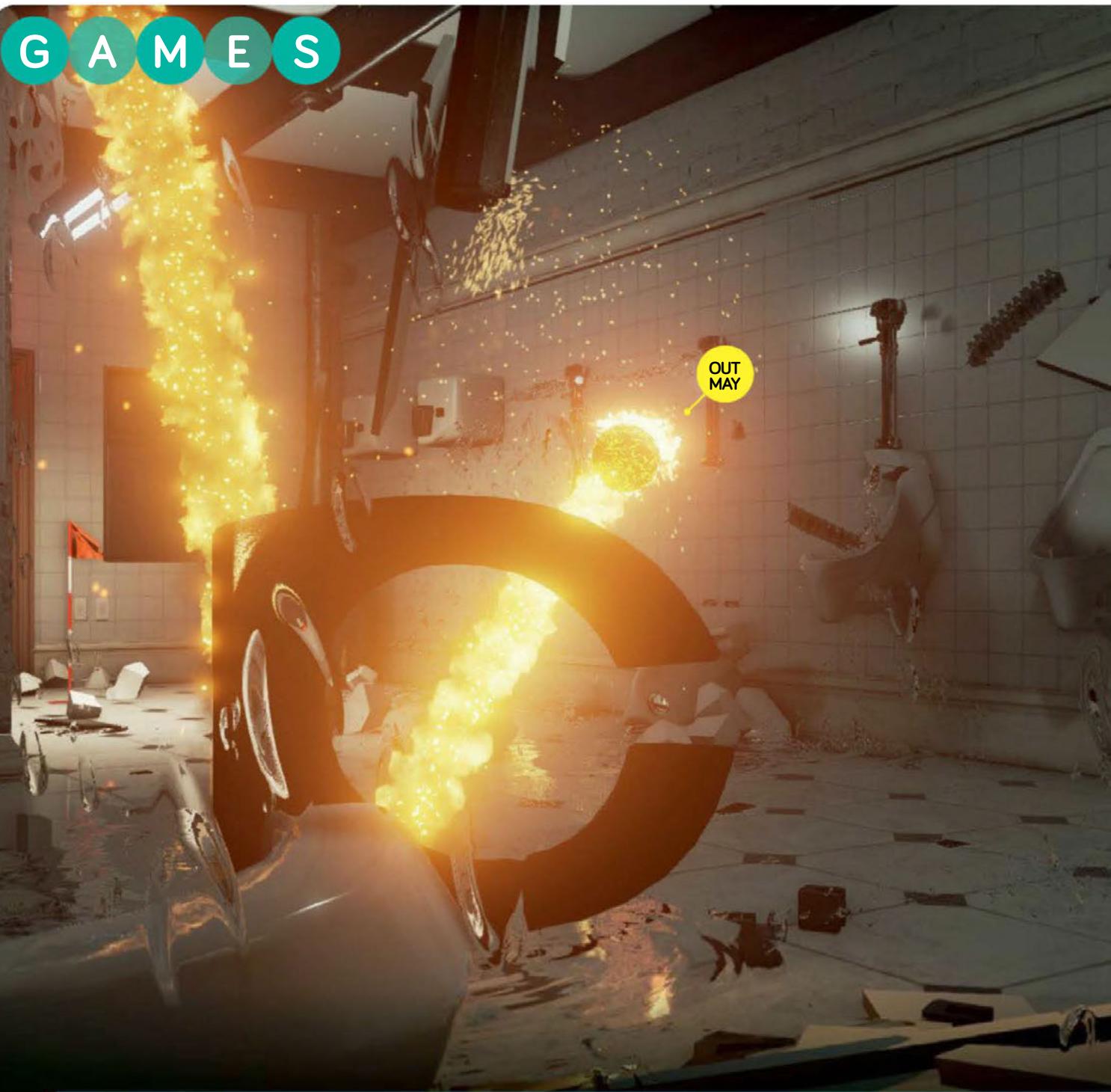


**DROP
EVERYTHING
& DOWNLOAD**

Music Memos
US\$free / iOS

Given a musical scenario, you'll often find an iPhone user in frozen befuddlement, their finger poised over a bulging folder of music apps like a guitarist with too many pedals and too few feet. Do they want Super Bonk VIII for this, or TrebleTwerker Pro Premium? Apple's own Music Memos is designed to be a simple (and free) sound capture option: the default prod for capturing that hummed, riffed or plonked ditty. It won't compress the sound like a voice memo app, and it does have whistles and bells such as tuning guides and tempo-matching backing instruments. Now, how did it go again? Ba-da-dum, ba-da-dee, doobap-squeee...





FIRST LOOK DANGEROUS GOLF

PS4, Xbox One, PC

If you ever played classic crash-'em-up *Burnout* and thought to yourself, 'This would be even better if my car was a golfball and instead of an urban road junction it was a room full of expensive vases', then not only do you have very specific ideas about the games you'd like to play, but you're also in luck – because *Dangerous Golf* is heading your way.

The *Burnout* comparison is no coincidence. *Dangerous Golf* comes from the same brains behind the arcade accident simulator. As you've probably

guessed, *Dangerous Golf* isn't too worried about pars, replacing divots or observing course etiquette. In fact, sinking the ball in the hole isn't even your number one priority – it's about causing as much carnage with it on the way, before pulling off a gnarly trick shot.

With over 100 holes set in joyously smash-up-able environments, such as cluttered kitchens, ornate bathrooms and fancy ballrooms, if you rack up enough points you can turn your projectile of mass destruction into an *NBA Jam*-inspired

fireball. Pull that off in the rural petrol station stage and you might even be rewarded with a *Zoolander*-style supercharged fireworks display.

Obviously, smashing stuff up on your own is fun but doing it with others and making the chaos competitive is even better, so there'll also be a turn-based party mode for up to eight players.

Whether the *Burnout* sequel they've been teasing recently exists or not, *Dangerous Golf* will certainly give us something to do while we wait to find out.



MULTIPLAYER HANDS-ON REBEL ROUGH STUFF IN CO-OP MODE

HOMEFRONT: THE REVOLUTION

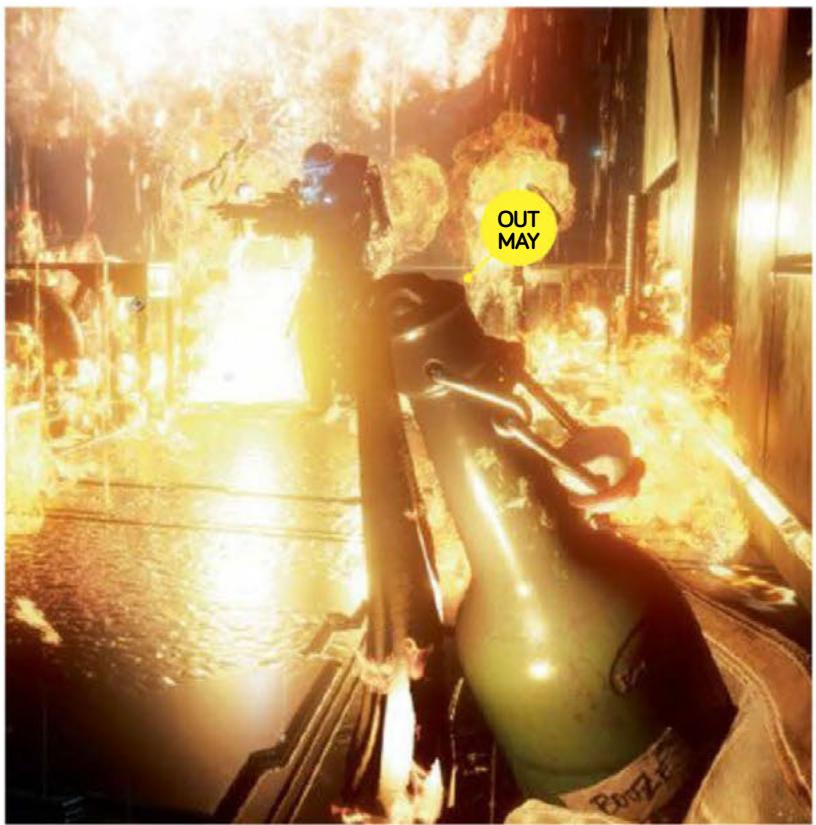
PS4, Xbox One, PC

When we played *Homefront: The Revolution* for the first time, its fully explorable, burnt-at-the-edges world was a pleasant surprise. Now we've also played the four-player co-op mode, things are looking even more promising.

America is under North Korean rule, and while the occupying forces can deploy drones, your arsenal is more B&Q than CIA. Guns can be customised on the fly using stuff you scavenge. Need a napalm-spewing shotgun or explosive RC car? Just find the ingredients.

Rather than the usual battalion of amped-up marines you play as one of a bunch of norms, your pre-war job dictating your special abilities. A retired exterminator might make more effective improvised explosives, while a fitness instructor has almost limitless stamina.

Co-op mode runs alongside the main campaign, with the 12 missions boxed into smaller but distinctly different areas. Communication is key for a stealthy approach. A badly timed takedown means all enemies in the area going on immediate full alert.



OCULUS RIFT LAUNCH GAMES SNOW, FOXES AND DRAGONS



EDGE OF NOWHERE PC

Not to be confused with *Edge Of Tomorrow*, the time-travelling thriller in which Tom Cruise dies lots, the aim of *Edge Of Nowhere* is to not die while searching for a missing team of explorers. But it's not just the cold you'll have to contend with. Things take a turn for the weird – and we don't mean another good Tom Cruise film.



LUCKY'S TALE PC

Most people imagine VR to be all about first-person shooters and arcade blasters such as *Eve: Valkyrie*, but *Lucky's Tale* is a throwback to the classic 3D platformers of the N64 days. You guide the fox on his colourful quest for coins, with bonus points possibly awarded for not waking up the neighbourhood with noisy intercourse.



CHRONOS PC

Like Christmas, Glastonbury and *World's Strongest Man* on TV, the labyrinth in *Chronos* is a once-a-year deal. Solving its mystery is the one thing that'll save your hero's homeland, but each time you fail it's 365 days before you can try again. Hopefully *Chronos* won't make you wait in real time or your Rift will become retro.



INCOMING

APRIL

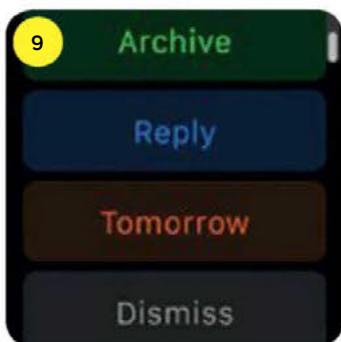
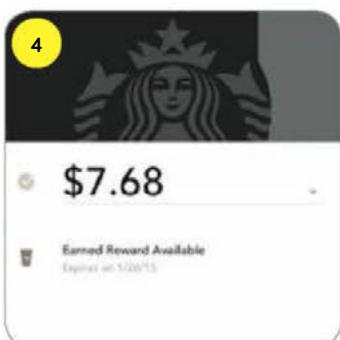
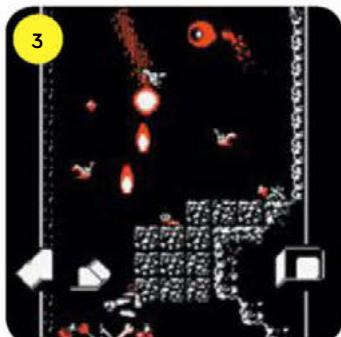
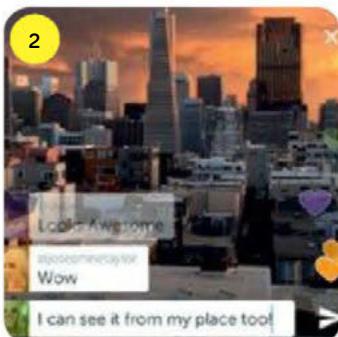
- DIRT RALLY
- RATCHET & CLANK
- DARK SOULS III

MAY

- BATTLEBORN
- DOOM
- MIRROR'S EDGE CATALYST

AUGUST

- DEUS EX: MANKIND DIVIDED



1 Countdown

US\$1.99 / Android

It seems like there ought to have been an app of this teatime TV quiz before now. And yet, nope, for here we are telling you about it. And, later, missing our train stops as we puzzle over a conundrum.

4 Starbucks

US\$free / iOS, Android

Where will this end? With the arrival on Android of Order & Pay, another battalion of queue-skippers can now join the giggling iOS hordes. But if we're all ordering ahead, who's queueing?

7 Hyperide

US\$free / iOS, Android

The world changes, Creme Eggs go weird, Clintons and Bushes come and go – but we will never tire of scrollly dodge games. This one is bright and space-based. (There's another, *Downwell*, top right.)

2 Periscope

US\$free / iOS, Android

(Look away now, Androiders.) An update to the iOS version of Periscope lets you broadcast using a Wi-Fi-connected GoPro camera. Now, if you're brave enough, you can livestream your rad action.

5 The Westport Independent

US\$4.99 / Android, iOS

Remember *Papers, Please?* This has a similarly bleak, sepia-tinted aesthetic but is about newspapers, not border crossings. Truth or readers? (We always choose truth.)

8 Go Rally

US\$4.99 / Apple TV

OK, so this isn't a mobile app. But we thought any mobile gamer worth their thumb gristle would want to know about this awesome-looking pass-and-play multiplayer Apple TV racing game.

3 Downwell

US\$2.99 / iOS, Android

We've been waiting ages for Alto's Adventure to come to Android, and it still hasn't, and we're exercising our anger with this frenetic down-scrolling blaster, which has now come to Android.

6 Bang & Olufsen BeoHome Design

US\$free / iPad

This app lets you augment your humdrum reality with awesome B&O products. Future updates may also beautify your family, perfume the dog and hide those sofa stains.

9 Airmail

US\$4.99 / iOS, Apple Watch

Email clients are like banks. Utter bastards. Just kidding – we mean that once one has one all set up, one is loath to switch. But this slick iOS and Apple Watch app might just be worth the hassle.

NOT JUST
AN APP

Mother Habits

**€135 /
iOS, Android**



Sen.se's eerie-faced IoT hub Mother has been merrily recording aspects of its users' lives for some time. But now it's about to start telling tales about things not being done.

Sticking a motion sensor on a door is basic

Internet of Things fun. But Mother's new Habits app will tell you if a door hasn't been opened when it should have been – when Grandad should have got his medication, for example. More interesting yet is the adjustability of the reporting. Has Timmy really done his cello practice? You can set the app to only 'validate' an activity if the correct type and duration of movement has been sensed. Which is the kind of creepy kid-tracking we're glad our own mothers never managed.



Pioneer

Presenting the AVH-X5850BT
NATURAL CLARITY



In-Dash Double-DIN DVD Multimedia
AV Receiver with 7" WVGA
Touchscreen Display, MIXTRAX,
Built-in Bluetooth® and Direct Control for
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www.pioneer-mea.com



WTF IS MOON- WALKER?

US\$250 (expected) /
2016moonwalker.com

What is this brand of stacked madness?

The tip of a Martian iceberg, is what it is. Nugget-encrusted nutjobs are scrabbling to launch commercial space flights, the Chinese are going back to the Moon and we all want to know whose shirt Tim Peake is wearing. (Disappointingly, an England rugby one. He couldn't have taken a Britain-encompassing Six Nations shirt?) Anyway... this is the space renaissance, baby, the dawning of the public age of the stars! And, thus, that oldest of industries – fashion – has fired its retros. The extraplanetary threads market is open, and these are off-the-shelf moon boots!

They look more like moon slip-ons. And none too vacuum-friendly.

Ah, it's the proverbial long game, is space. Shipping your high street space range now would be too early even for the early adopters. No, best to first get terrestrial hipsters into the vibe: these long-sighted loafers are designed for local use. But! Stop thumping the walls of your cardboard box spaceship in disgust, for they do involve an entirely space-like mode of perambulation.

Are they artificially cooled to the blood-freezing temperature of space?

Even more exciting! Two layers of polar-opposed mega-magnets mean that wearers are actually floating above the terranean landscape like air-breathing astrodudes. It was in the name all along: MoonWalker. Bounce like an Armstrong!

Break your ankle like a dope!

Now, stop that, you gravity-wearied funsucker. The makers – and with their Indiegogo campaign 700% funded, they are very much promoted from dreamers to makers – have given the MoonWalkers multiple supporting layers, including one of foot-hugging memory foam. Don't tell us you're not intrigued, don't pretend you wouldn't jump at this sub-millionaire slice of lunar living? Yeah, you would.



Synth I've been loving you KORG MINILOGUE

And we might put this on a pedestal in the town market and run up a flag marked 'affordable'. And a passing oik might laugh, and with his fellow hoodlums run rings around us, singing "Silly Stuff, Silly Stuff, on your bike; it's software synths that skinflints like." And we might take up a cane and give merry chase – were it not for laws about such – and give the urchins a swift re-education. Yes, we might say, your laptop or tablet are capable of mellifluous output, but there's a special magic that comes from kerplunking the keys or twiddling the knobs of something such as this Korg, a metal-and-wood analogue four-voice polyphonic synth for less only US\$500. And then we might get back to our stall to find that oikish co-conspirators have nicked our synth.

US\$500 / korg.com



Multi-bit box of bliss SONY UHP-H1

Audiophiles aren't enticed by the shiny surfaces of big-screen TVs – their nirvana comes neatly packaged in DSD files and as 24-bit perfection. Thankfully, Sony knows this. That's why it's crammed all its hi-res audio knowhow into a greyer-than-grey unit that'll stream sumptuous sounds straight from Spotify to a proximate pair of Bluetooth headphones. Should some 'eye people' come around for dinner, it'll reveal itself to be also a Blu-ray box capable of 4K upscaling. And once they've toddled off again, it'll talk to traditional hi-fi systems.

US\$199 / sony.com



You got skills, they're multiplaying TEUFEL BAMSTER XS

You've got a thing on your keys that can pop bottles. You know how to remove a shoelace and use it as a door lock. You have a zipper canvas belt in which you have not quite enough money for a taxi in three currencies. You're quite the action man. But what you lack is a soundtrack. Because those rucksacks with speakers are goofy, and most so-called portable speakers are too bulky for road warriors like you. Consider Teufel, then, for the Bamster XS weighs just 204g, and measures 14x7x2.3cm – small enough for a pocket. It is a Bluetooth speaker, although it does have a 3.5mm aux input for that audio cable you wear as a bracelet. And it also has a mic, so you can call home and ask what time's tea. Fourteen hours of battery life, so you'll be peckish.

[US\\$90 / teufelaudio.com](http://us90/teufelaudio.com)



Make your ride sing PIONEER DEH-X1853UB

It's time to chuck out that piece-o'-junk CD receiver that's been killing the vibe in your car and replace it with something a little more state-o'-the-art. This is a full-featured control panel for your tunes that has 3 RCA pre-outs for your front and rear speakers as well as a subwoofer. Sure, it's well equipped enough for you to dig out your vintage collection of *Hootie* CDs for a ride down nostalgia street, but the real killer feature is the free Pioneer ARC (Advanced Remote Control) app available on iOS and Android. It acts as a master control for the receiver allowing you to beam across music, maps and even video audio from your smartphone into the 21st century.

[US\\$80 / pioneer-me.com](http://us80/pioneer-me.com)

DECIPHER ALLOW ME TO EXPLAIN...



#12 PS CHANGES

Tom Morgan



As if there was any doubt PlayStation was one of Sony's biggest assets, the firm has just revealed its plan for the next 20 years: Sony Interactive Entertainment.

This new mega-company merges the two parts of Sony that deal with all things PlayStation. Sony Computer Entertainment used to handle hardware and games, while Sony Network Entertainment dealt with the PlayStation Network. As confirmed by Jim Ryan on the PlayStation blog, Sony Interactive Entertainment will be based in San Mateo, California, and represent the entire PlayStation division. Andrew House, SCE's current president and CEO, will remain in charge.

A name change might not sound like a big deal, but having all parts of the company in one place should make it easier to team up on new hardware like PlayStation VR, and share tech smarts between the network team and any

THIS SHOULD MAKE IT EASIER FOR SONY TO TEAM UP ON HARDWARE LIKE PLAYSTATION VR

Sony World Wide Studios devs working on multiplayer games.

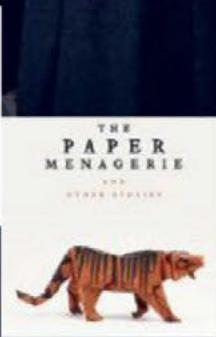
It might be the right move to grow the PS4 and PlayStation VR, but the name change is a bit poignant for PS1 fans; the SCE logo was the first thing to fade onscreen whenever you booted up an original PlayStation.

Sony's European arm will continue to operate in London, but rebranded as Sony Interactive Entertainment Europe. There's no clue if the new name means teams will start working more closely together on launch dates and PSN discounts, though. The rebranding will come into effect on 1 April.



YOUR MONTH MAR

Spring has sprung, the winter's done, get your boxset-devouring self off your bum



1

DUBAI CANVAS

Jumeirah Beach Residence, Dubai
Either you'll have a lovely day out and find yourself some fab new art, priced from the surprisingly reasonable to shockingly extortionate. Or, you'll be so incensed at the prices you'll dust off your 3D printer to go and make your own. Either way: win.

08

THE PAPER MENAGERIE & OTHER STORIES

by Ken Liu
Have you heard of Ken Liu? He's the American sci-fi writer who also translated the award-winning *The Three-Body Problem* by Liu Cixin. Have you heard of Liu Cixin? Who have you heard of?



11

HITMAN

PS4, Xbox One, PC
The next-gen *Hitman* release has gone episodic. Presuming you swerved February's beta release, on the 11th you can get two missions, *Prologue* and *Paris*, for £11.99. Then you can buy further episodes as they come out, or wait until the end of the year and get the whole lot at once.



18

POST POP DEPRESSION

Iggy Pop
The proto-punk legend's seventeenth studio album sees him joining forces with Queens of the Stone Age's Josh Homme on producing duties, as well as fellow Stone Age compatriot Dean Fertita and Arctic Monkey Matt Helders on drums. Expect nine tracks of loud and awesome.



25

BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE

Whoever created the image folder for this on Stuff's file server titled it 'Batman V Ballbag'. Which tells you that emotions run deep, and battle lines are drawn for this most peculiar of cinematic duels.



30

GITEX SHOPPER

Dubai World Trade Centre
Are you after a ridiculous bargain on some of the best of last year's tech? Then head down to the first of the year's twice-annual gadgetbonanza, where, if you can brave the crowds, you'll find great deals on gear from some of the biggest brands.

WIN



WIN! ONE OF THREE 3-MONTH BEIN CONNECT SUBSCRIPTIONS

Isn't teamwork great? It sure is! We've teamed up with beIN to offer three lucky winners a 3-month subscription to the revamped beIN Connect service. They're the lot that bring you all your favourite major footy competitions such as the UEFA Champions League, Barclays Premier League, La Liga, Bundesliga, Serie A and Ligue 1. That's on top of all the other sporty-goodness of major tournaments and matches across Basketball, Tennis, Formula 1 and Rugby.

Ah, but you knew that already, didn't you? Clever. What you might not know is that beIN Connect has now expanded outside the scope of pure sports and added three brand new movie channels for a complete family entertainment package in Arabic, English and French. All 19 channels are broadcast in crystal-clear HD quality and can be accessed on everything from iOS and Android smartphones and tablets, as well as PlayStation 4, Xbox One, PCs and Smart TVs. That's more content than you can shake a remote control at, available on demand as and when you want to watch it. Don't say we're not kind to you, dear reader.

HOW TO ENTER

For a chance to win one of three 3-months subscriptions to beIN Connect go to stuff.tv/me/win and answer this simple question:

WHO HOLDS THE RECORD FOR THE MOST TITLES IN FA CUP HISTORY?

- A Arsenal
- B West Ham United
- C Manchester United

For more info visit bein.net/connect

HURRY!
COMPETITION
CLOSES ON
APR 1

Terms & conditions

All entries to be submitted by April 1, 2016. The prizes are as stated and no cash alternative is available. Prizes are non-transferable. The decision of Motivate Publishing is final and no correspondence will be entered into. For full terms and conditions see: www.stuff.tv/me/terms-and-conditions-me



SILVERBACK

LIGHTWEIGHT PERFORMANCE BICYCLES



Scalera 1.0

Award-winning Scalera frame
Full Shimano Ultegra Di2 11 Speed
Fulcrum Racing Quattro wheel set
AED 14,499 / \$ 3,970



The **Scalera** road bicycle range is a race-bred high performance carbon platform. This design combines rigidity and aerodynamics into a highly attractive package. The carbon layup is stiff and lightweight and has been carefully calculated to meet the high demands of racing cyclists. The geometry is finely tuned for every size, resulting in an accurate and agile ride-feel at all speeds for riders of every stature.

#BornToBeFast

Scalera 2.0

Award-winning Scalera frame | Full Shimano Ultegra 11 Speed
Fulcrum Racing Quattro wheel set
AED 11,499 / \$ 3,150



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- >ESC THE GYM
- >CTRL YOUR WEIGHT
- >RTN TO PEAK CONDITION

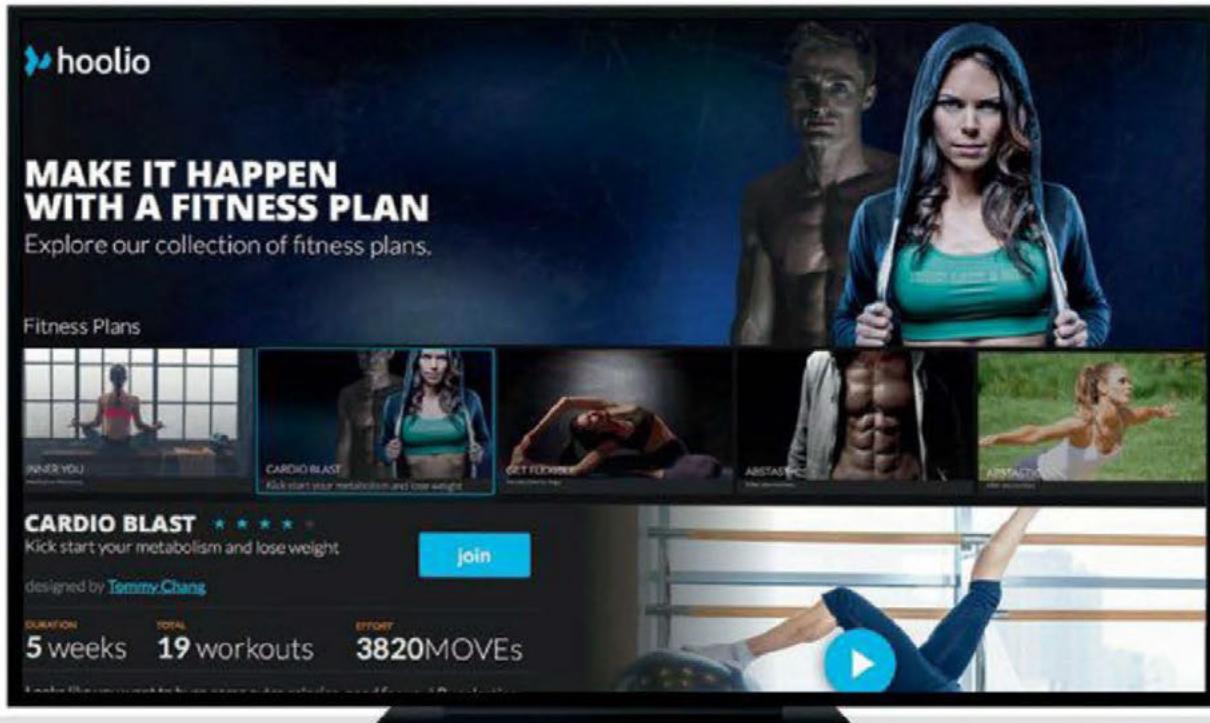
> RUN UPGRADE YOURSELF

> TECHNOLOGY ISN'T ABOUT KEEPING YOU ON THE SOFA ANY MORE. THESE GET-FIT GADGETS WILL MAKE A MACHINE OF YOU



SUPERCHARGE YOUR TRACKING

Exercise is gruelling enough without doing maths at the same time, so let tech count your reps, heartbeats and more



Hoolio

from US\$free / hoolio.com

If something is aiming to be 'the Netflix of fitness', that doesn't mean you're meant to wallow in front of it all weekend, mainlining Dr Pepper and Pringles, and only getting up to answer the door to the pizza delivery guy – quite the opposite, in fact. Hoolio lets you and your friends participate in high-tech workout videos, initially drawn from YouTube but soon to be joined by its own original workouts, made in partnership with Technogym. It's more Mr Motivator than Mr Robot.

The idea is to remove the isolation of online workout videos, so you can dial in friends (a bit like a sweaty Skype call) and take on a session together. Taking part as a team (it supports up to four people per session) adds an element of friendly competition – nobody wants to be the first to say they can't hack the

pace. Hoolio has seen completion rates of workouts hit 80%, rather than the 20% seen when people go solo.

"By working out with a partner, you're more motivated and you're going to get better results," co-founder and CEO Nicholas Douzinas told us. "They don't necessarily work out for the entire time," he admits, "but as long as people are connected, we can motivate them."

Hoolio is primarily web-based (see how to get it on your TV via Chromecast, right) but it also runs on Apple TV, and there's an iOS app that functions as a remote control. Use it while wearing any HealthKit-compatible activity tracker (an Apple Watch, for example) and it can display live heart-rate info on the big screen, and there are plans to introduce live feedback based on how hard you're working. Good news for everyone who isn't a personal trainer.



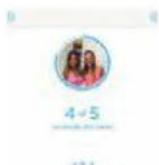
Hero quest

Cardio, pilates and yoga form the core catalogue of workouts but Hoolio wants to offer all kinds of special sessions throughout the year, including one designed to give you the physique of a superhero. Presumably that means post-not pre-snack Bananaman.



Telly tubby

Don't have an Apple TV? Hoolio runs in Chrome, so just pick up a Chromecast and you can beam your browser tab to the telly and feel the burn working out in the living room. There may be more space there but try not to drip sweat all over the new carpet and sofa set, eh?



Alternatively...

Zova

Zova also works with Apple TV and supports the Watch for heart-rate monitoring, but its scope of exercises is more limited. [US\\$free / zova.com](http://zova.com)



Gymwatch

If you spend more time pumping iron than an Arnie impersonator, the Gymwatch is your ideal spotter. Whether you're using free weights or gym machines it'll scrutinise your arms or legs (it can be worn on either) to count reps and check you're doing each exercise correctly, with real-time feedback on the iOS and Android app. It knows over 900 movements and will correct you like a tiny robotic personal trainer. **US\$150** / gymwatch.com

BEST FOR
CYCLE FANATICS



Polar M450

Conversely, if you spend more time pedal pushing than Lance Armstrong, this is your ideal mate. Whether you're hitting the open road or a Wadi trail, it'll track your speed, distance and route with state-of-the-art GPS powered by a zippy satellite connection. This clever bike computer also includes an integrated barometer for keeping an eye on your altitude and a barrage of tests to help you achieve shapely calf muscles. **US\$260** / polar.com



BSX Insight

While most trackers ride on your wrist, the Insight's sensor has its own compression sleeve that's worn on the calf; this takes oxygenation readings directly from your muscles, so it knows how hard you're working. If you want to measure heart rate as well, it's compatible with ANT+ monitors. Back at base, check out the data in the Android or iOS app to work out where you can push a bit harder. **from US\$300** / bsxinsight.com



Track My Fitness

It's quite possible you're already wearing a fitness tracker, it's called your smartwatch. Track My Fitness from Vimo Labs (available for the Apple Watch and Android Wear) supercharges the sensors in your wearable, detecting what exercises you're doing, tracking reps and calories burned, with routines and instructions delivered by a 'personal trainer'. New workouts are added every week. **US\$free** / trackmy.fit



Stages Power Meter

Weighing in at under 20g, the Stages Power Meter is downright miniature. It's tough too, made from the same material as bulletproof glass, it'll withstand the toughest terrain you can drag your bike across. Essentially, it's a Bluetooth dongle that you attach to the crank between the left side of your bike and pedal. It measures the power of your left leg, doubling it to determine your total power. This focus means Stages can keep the cost down while still providing avid cyclists dead-accurate readings. **US\$650** / stagescycling.com

What's next?

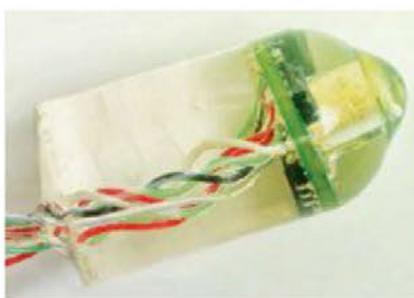
For sporty types who hate wearing a tracker...

No matter how discreet they've become, fitness trackers still require you to wear something, and that can be distracting. What if they could do their thing without any extra kit at all, just using the phone in your pocket? Researchers at MIT are working on a project called BioPhone, which will allow your phone to monitor your heart rate and breathing using only its built-in accelerometer, meaning you could leave it squirrelled away in your shorts, or even in a backpack, and it'd still do its thing.

It works best when you're recovering and there's not too much noise to interfere with

the tracking, but researchers have managed to get within a beat or two per minute when measuring heart rate and a quarter of a breath when monitoring respiration.

If that's not quite accurate enough for you and you'd rather not carry your phone at all, how about a tracker you can swallow? Elsewhere at MIT a team has developed a pill-sized prototype sensor that's so small it can sit in your stomach and use a tiny microphone to listen in to the sounds of your heart beating and your lungs expanding – it's essentially a stethoscope you eat. This sensor then feeds the data to a receiver up to three metres away and still works



while you're digesting that burrito you had for lunch.

It's probably better suited to gym-based activity than a jog round the block and it'll only stick around for a day or two before, er, reappearing, but this could be ideal for anyone who prefers running *au naturel*.

FITNESS
TESTED
TRACKERS



Moov Now

from US\$100 / moov.cc

What's the story?

While it might look like just another wrist-mounted movement monitor, the Now is actually more trainer than tracker. It can count steps and snoop on your snoozing, but that data is the hardest to track down in the app; the real focus is on active minutes in whatever form they take. That can be climbing a few stairs or jogging round the park, but proper workouts are its *raison d'être*. It has its own bank of guided sessions, complete with voice coaching and rep counting, plus it'll also pair with third-party heart-rate monitors for even better muscle-making monitoring. Quite the show from a US\$100 strap.

Is it any good?

The Now relies entirely on your phone, meaning you won't be able to run too far from your handset, but the quality and accuracy of its tracking and training is impeccable. Because sessions are selected at the start, the Now knows what motion to look for and can guide you to great effect as you gurn and grimace through seven-minute ab-crunchers, sprint intervals and bicycle burners. Moov isn't interested in motivating you to meet your daily step goals; it'd rather replace your gym subscription and get you properly burning off the burgers with real-world workouts on your wrist.

Tech specs

Weight 6g Battery 6 months Connectivity Bluetooth

STUFF SAYS ★★★★☆

A superb always-there trainer to get you working out and burning off

Misfit Shine

US\$70 / misfit.com

What's the story?

A sliver of aluminium to catch the eye of Apple advocates, the Shine's shell hides smarts as sleek as its exterior. A quick double tap on its top brings up an array of white lights on the clock-like display that show your progress as a percentage of a circle, followed by pulsing lights to indicate the current time. You can clip it to yourself, wear it on your wrist or around your neck, or buy Misfit-compatible socks and T-shirts. It's also fully waterproof to 50m, so it can be used as a swimming sensor (there's even a Speedo edition with extra swim-tracking skills).

Is it any good?

Misfit hasn't sacrificed substance in its delivery of style. A range of activity tracking options, including swimming, cycling and yoga, can be deployed with a triple tap; but you have to choose which one it should activate in advance via the app, which isn't ideal. That said, exercises are easily reassigned after you've finished and it generally tracks accurately, except when it's stuck to your shirt. We're less keen on the Misfit app – discovering in-depth data requires some delving – but as a standalone solution to help you hit your daily anti-slob targets, the Shine is a sterling bit of kit.

Tech specs

Weight 9.4g Battery 6 months Connectivity Bluetooth

STUFF SAYS ★★★★☆

The sleek Misfit Shine packs plenty of passive tracking smarts to get you moving



**BEST FOR
SMART SWIMMERS**



BEST FOR
NOTIFICATION NERDS



Polar Loop 2

US\$120 / polar.com

What's the story?

Employing a small touch panel for scrolling through time, target progress, calories burned and steps taken, the Loop 2's simple interface is built on a battery that's good for five days at worst. The cut-to-fit comfort of the rubberised Loop is perfectly wearable if you can stomach its shiny strips, and you can splash through 20m of the wet stuff before it'll conk out. Its LED dot display definitely won't go unnoticed: it's bright to the point of being painful, so there's no issue spotting it to silence the alarm, while perpetual notification missers will benefit from the Loop 2's optional vibrations for smartphone alerts.

Is it any good?

As step counters go, it does its duty better than many. Daily targets are presented as a gradually filling bar and stride-counting accuracy is on a par with competitors; but, lacking a built-in heart-rate sensor, it frequently under-rewards anything that doesn't involve vigorous wrist movements. 'Time to move' reminders help you avoid the dreaded inactivity stamp, but stats are often easier to analyse via Polar's web platform than in the slow-to-sync app, so only the notifications justify the price hike over similar (and more stylish) trackers.

Tech specs

Weight 38g Battery 8 days with 24/7 activity tracking and 1h/day training Connectivity Bluetooth

STUFF SAYS ★★★☆☆

The Loop 2 is more than a pedometer, but not quite a fitness tracker either

Jawbone Up Move

US\$50 / jawbone.com

What's the story?

You can slap the Jawbone Up Move on your wrist with the bundled multicoloured strap, but it's happiest when slotted into its rubber housing and attached to a belt, bra or anywhere else you feel happy dangling a pebble of plastic. It's about as svelte and subtle as a child's toy, but it feels pretty robust when holstered on the hip, which also happens to be the best step-tracking position. It's all very straightforward: different clicks initiate different monitoring modes and the bold light-up bars on its round frontage make it easy to see what it's up to.

Is it any good?

The Move is generally a spot-on surveyor of strides. Sure, it detects a few phantom paces here and there, but for everyday monitoring it's reliable enough to be useful. Its colourful companion app instantly illustrates your step tally and sleep data in handy vertical bars, with the option to input food, set goals and see get-fit tips for the full Smart Coach experience. Syncing is manual, which means it has a battery life measured in months, but that severely limits its motivational abilities. It is good at what it does, but it's hard to get away from the feeling that it's essentially a glorified pedometer.

Tech specs

Weight 6.8g Battery 6 months Connectivity Bluetooth

STUFF SAYS ★★★★☆

A penny-saving pedestrian package from Jawbone, but the Up Move is no more than that

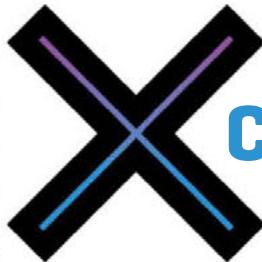


BEST FOR
CLIP-ON COUNTING

Sleep tracking: is it worth it?

"Sleep tracking has the potential to be more useful to the wearer than to a doctor, as it could help people notice the effects of their behaviour and consumption during the day and the effect on their sleep," says GP Richard Harkness.

"However, it may help a doctor see the impact of conditions such as asthma on people's sleep, while those with obstructive sleep apnoea (or a suspicion of it) could help track just how often they are waking at night."



CONNECT YOUR CLOTHES

Smartwatches and fitness bands are great, but tomorrow's fit-tech will be woven into the fabric of your workout gear



Athos

from US\$350 / liveathos.com

You don't actually need special clothes to tell you what's going on with your body – just go for a run in a grey T-shirt and dark patches will gradually form under your armpits to show you've been working hard. The only problem with sweat is that it doesn't provide much data on which muscles were working – and it doesn't matter how hard you try, it just won't connect to any of the fitness apps available. Sweat 2.0 can't come soon enough.

In the meantime, there's Athos – an outfit of shirt and shorts (for men and women) that's riddled with sensors feeding your vital stats to the Core, a wearable receiver that transmits it all to the app via Bluetooth. Woven into the shirt are two breathing sensors, two heart-rate sensors and 12 electromyography (EMG) sensors,

which measure muscle activity using the electrical signals produced when they move; the shorts have eight EMG sensors and four heart sensors. There are no breathing sensors in the shorts, presumably to avoid damaging the Core with any post-lunch wind.

All of this info is fed to the app in real time, so you can see exactly which muscles are working and how hard, plus calories burned and average and peak heart rates. With all that info on board it can help you to avoid injury and tell you if you're hitting the showers too early, or neglecting certain areas when you go to the gym – which should help you gradually take things to the next level and avoid ending up looking like Johnny Bravo. It's the kind of stuff you used to have to hook yourself up to all kinds of scary-looking machinery to find out.



Material girl

Athos's gear is made from a breathable, sweat-wicking combination of nylon and Lycra to keep you dry and cool. It's also water-resistant, so you can use it for all-weather running and cycling rather than being confined to the gym.



Personal trainer

Athos will also count reps for you and make sure you're doing each exercise with correct form. In fact, pretty much the only thing it can't do is the actual workout for you. Shame.



Power play

The Core's battery should be good for around 10 hours of exercise. So unless you're planning on taking part in a triple-deca-ultratriathlon (that's a 71-mile swim, 3355-mile cycle and 786-mile run) it should last a few strenuous training sessions before it needs recharging.



Digitsole Warm Series

If you thought putting your pants on straight from the radiator was the ultimate in winter luxury, Digitsole's Warm Series will blow your socks off. These heated, app-controlled inner soles can be stoked up to 45°C and will pump out heat for up to six hours. They also count your steps and calories burned, so the warm fuzzy feeling of accomplishment should stretch further than just the soles of your feet.

US\$200 / digitsole.com



Antelope

Remember those belts from late night TV that promised to give you a six pack by electrocuting your abs? Antelope's suit is essentially one of those you can wear out and about. Electrodes are woven into it, with a Bluetooth-connected battery pack and an app to control how it buzzes you depending on your exercise programme. The idea is it works more muscle fibres, so you get better results with the same amount of effort.

US\$1600 / antelope.club



LumoRun

Stuffing something in your running shorts isn't normally the way to nail a new PB (unless it's a rocket) but LumoRun's sensor fits into a pocket in the back of special strides to log cadence, bounce, braking, stride length, pelvic rotation and ground contact time. The app gives you real-time audio feedback via headphones, so you can decide whether you'd be better off just replacing it with a rocket after all.

from US\$150 / lumobodytech.com



Hexoskin

It looks like a wetsuit and sounds like something from a low budget sci-fi movie, but the Hexoskin might just be the cleverest exercise kit around. Worn underneath your gym clother, its sensors feed data to a tiny Bluetooth pod. It measures everything from heart-rate variation and breathing volume to your sleep (if you can get to sleep in it, that is). No wonder NASA has given them to astronauts.

from US\$400 / hexoskin.com

What's next?

We see inside Asics' secret running lab

For a runner, visiting Asics' Institute of Sport Science (ISS) in Tokyo is like getting to snoop around Apple's R&D lab. The Asics approach to making trainers is like OS development: each shoe is fine-tuned and updated before the next version is released.

Looping around the building is a 350m running track with three lanes: two professional surfaces like those used in the Olympics and a third made of asphalt, as used by us pavement plodders. This continues into the building to create a 50m straight, where motion capture cameras gather mind-boggling amounts of biomechanical data on

everything from knee angles to foot strikes, while force plates underneath the tracks combine with markers on the trainers to let scientists see which parts of the shoes are stretching excessively.

Up on the roof, a man is running up and down a mechanically adjustable ramp. A sensor in his shoes helps Asics measure how running motions differ on slopes, so it can design trainers specifically for hill runners. It's the kind of attention to detail required to make each new line of trainers incrementally better.

But our favourite zone is the material testing lab. In one corner, a pair of robot feet do continuous step-ups to test



the flex of the upper; across the room a robotic leg moonwalks across a puddle to measure grip, and a row of tiny maces bob up and down on a spinning wheel of fabric to test the thread.

And the good news for amateurs is that this lab tech

is spreading to the high street. The Foot ID system films you running on a treadmill to find out your degree of 'pronation' (the way your foot rolls when you run) and takes a 3D scan of your foot so it can be matched to a specific model of shoe.



Basis Peak

US\$200 / mybasis.com

What's the story?

Unlike most fitness watches, which require the user to tell them the activity they're about to embark on in order to track it effectively, the Basis Peak captures a continuous stream of movement and physiological data and automatically identifies what you're up to without asking – it'll even know when you've nodded off at the end of the day. On the back is an optical heart-rate tracker, and it can take the temperature of your skin. It'll connect to your phone for call, text, calendar and email notifications, but with its monochrome screen it's more Pebble than Apple Watch.

Is it any good?

The Peak's auto detection works very effectively; the only problem is that it struggles to tell the difference between pausing to tie a shoelace and a genuine, premature wheezing breakdown. That means it often chops your runs into smaller chunks, making it hard to compare times on your regular route. Even with its always-on heart-rate monitor, the battery will last the best part of a week, although for an accurate pulse you do need to crank up the strap tension. Phone notifications are unobtrusive but limited to basic functionality.

Tech specs

Tracking Steps, running, cycling, sleep
Display 1.26in, 144x168 **Connectivity** Bluetooth
Heart-rate monitor Yes **Waterproof** 5 ATM
Battery 4 days **Weight** 27g (without strap)

STUFF SAYS ★★★★☆

The Basis Peak has great battery life and innovative tracking, but it doesn't collect data in a useful way

Garmin Fenix 3

US\$600 / fenix3.garmin.com

What's the story?

If you can think of it, the Fenix 3 probably tracks it: steps, sleep, various sports... and it's even got built-in weather, compass, altimeter, barometer and thermometer apps. It's also a full-on smartwatch with notification support for everything from emails, tweets and WhatsApp messages to football scores, and it'll control your music. The watch itself is big, but stylish: you could wear it with a suit and it wouldn't look out of place. Each button has two functions, the secondary one accessed via a long press. At first it's difficult to remember what everything does but you pick it up before long.

Is it any good?

Hit the start/stop button, choose your activity, wait five seconds for a GPS signal and you're off. The screen can be customised to show different metrics, but there's no heart rate or cadence tracking without a chest strap. It's the swim tracking that makes the Fenix 3 really stand out: it shows your pace, route, distance, calories and stroke rate, which puts even a swimming instructor to shame. Garmin's Connect app is required for syncing, and it works with apps such as Strava and MyFitnessPal.

Tech specs

Tracking Steps, running, cycling, swimming, skiing
Display 1.2in colour LCD, 218x218 **Connectivity** GPS, GLONASS, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth **Heart-rate monitor** No
Waterproof 10 ATM **Battery** Up to 50 hrs **Weight** 82g

STUFF SAYS ★★★★☆

The Fenix 3 is pricey, but it's a proper smartwatch that's unbeatable for serious triathletes



BEST FOR
MULTISPORT MAVENS



TomTom Spark Music + Cardio

US\$250 / tomtom.com

What's the story?

Forever frustrated by slapping a smartphone in an armband or clutching it in your perspiring paw while you run? 3GB of internal memory means you can load TomTom's Spark with tunes, hook up a pair of Bluetooth headphones, leave your phone on the sideboard and get on with your 10K. Having told it which activity you want to track, it'll record steps, pace, distance, sleep and calories crushed using GPS and the onboard heart monitor. The sturdy silicone strap and pop-lock buckle are well suited to sports but its hulking four-way 'button' gives it a chassis that only a mother could love.

Is it any good?

It's best to select a playlist before you start because music controls can be a pain to use on the move, which is a real let-down considering the interface for accessing stats and training options is quick and intuitive. The heart-rate tracking isn't accurate enough to be useful but the mapping did a pretty precise job of following our jogs, on or off-road and under tree cover (although battery life took a hit). Once you're home you can access detailed data via the app or TomTom's My Sport web platform, although it can take its time to sync and upload.

Tech specs

Tracking Steps, running, swimming, sleep **Display** 22x25mm, 144x168 **Connectivity** GPS, GLONASS, Bluetooth **Heart-rate monitor** Yes **Waterproof** 5 ATM **Battery** Up to 3 weeks (5 hrs GPS + music) **Weight** 50g

STUFF SAYS ★★★☆☆

Unless you must have music on your wrist, there are better options out there to accompany your workout

Withings Activité Pop

US\$150 / withings.com

What's the story?

A cheaper alternative to Withings' standard Activité, the Pop is a traditionally styled ticker with an analogue approach to activity tracking. In the bottom right of the face there's a hand that tells you how close you are to hitting your daily target, which you set in advance via the Health Mate app. That's also where you can find your in-depth tracking and sleep stats and compare them with your Pop-wearing friends. The straps are interchangeable, meaning you can clip in new colours or, in theory, have one custom made. At a glance it could just be a normal watch – and that's a good thing.

Is it any good?

The Pop's colourful face is clear and uncluttered, which makes for great contrast against the white hands. It'll detect more vigorous movement and log it as running, giving you credit for that desperate dash to the bus stop. It's waterproof too, and will automatically pick up swimming, although that's where its tracking skills end. Still, it's accurate and the battery lasts months, making it a wearable you can really live with – with just enough smarts to satisfy those who don't devour data. It'll never be a full-on sports watch, but it will track you in style.

Tech Specs

Tracking Steps, swimming, sleep **Display** Analogue **Connectivity** Bluetooth **Heart-rate monitor** No **Waterproof** 5 ATM **Battery** 8 months **Weight** 37g

STUFF SAYS ★★★★☆

A sleek step-tracker for those of simple tastes and sophisticated wrists



BEST FOR
LOOKING LIKE A WATCH

Follow your heart

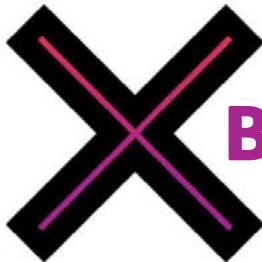
"Heart rate is more important than tracking anything else."

GP Richard Harkness says. "Home readings are now thought to be more valid

than clinic readings, so both you and the doctor benefit

from this information. Just don't get obsessive. If you don't have diagnosed high blood pressure, testing it once a month would do.

Then, if you're getting high readings, step that up to 1-2 times a day. If those readings persist, always speak to a healthcare professional."



BE YOUR OWN DIGITAL DOCTOR

Stay away from the scalpel but be sure to keep these health-monitoring gadgets close to hand



Qardio

from US\$100 / getqardio.com

Playing doctor and self-diagnosing with the help of **Nurse Google** is normally a surefire way to turn yourself into a hypochondriac, but not if you've got the right tools to hand. Qardio's fleet of day-to-day health gadgets allow you to keep track of three vital signs: blood pressure, heart rate and weight.

The **QardioArm** (\$100) might look like a headphone amp, but it monitors your blood pressure rather than sprucing up tunes (although it'll also pick up on any irregular rhythms from your ticker). All the data is sent over Bluetooth to your phone, which can be paired with a tap, and it's all plotted on charts to help you spot changes. The cuff doubles up as a cover when it's not in use.

If you want more deets on your beats, the **QardioCore** (\$160) is a chest strap that's designed for everyday

use in mind, not just when you're out running a triathlon. It can also pick up on stress levels, body temperature and respiratory rate, plus it'll record all the things an activity tracker around your wrist would monitor and send it all to the Qardio app.

And then there's the **QardioBase** (\$130) – a sleek set of smart scales that look like they could've been designed by Nest. In fact, they look so chic it's almost a shame to stand on them. But you should, otherwise they won't measure your BMI, muscle mass, body fat percentage, water and bone composition and standard weight. Shed some pounds and you'll be rewarded between your feet.

All of Qardio's kit connects to the same app, plus it'll integrate with Apple's HealthKit, so you can build a complete picture of your health.



Alternatively... Withings Blood Pressure Monitor

This app-assisted arm cuff turns your vital signs into a simple chart on your screen that's colour-coded and easy to understand. **US\$130 / withings.com**



23andMe

Who you inherit your genes from doesn't just determine whether you think coriander tastes like soap, or if you can roll your tongue (which is disputed anyway); it can tell you all sorts about your health. 23andMe's at-home DNA tests don't require any blood; simply send off a saliva sample and it'll be analysed for over 100 conditions and bodily traits you might've been unaware of, from lactose intolerance to earwax type.

US\$100 / 23andme.com

Prana

Stop slouching. Come on, we can see you doing it. If you had one of Prana's breathing and posture monitors we wouldn't have to shout at you. It sits on your waistband and works out whether you're sitting properly (and breathing properly as a result), pinging your phone if you could be sitting up straighter. If you want, you can even play a little game. We like to call it Sit Up Straight Or You'll End Up Looking Like A Hunchback, Idiot.

US\$199 / prana.co

BEST FOR CALORIE COUNTERS

HealBe GoBe

Wearing the GoBe is like having a step tracker for your mouth. While plenty of fitness bands will tell you how many calories you've burned, that won't mean much unless you know how many you've shovelled into the furnace in the first place. GoBe's wrist-riding calorie counter calculates your intake by measuring changes in the glucose levels in your skin. So there's no use pretending you didn't have that doughnut earlier.

US\$300 / healbe.com

Kokoon

Insomniacs all need a set of these wireless noise-cancelling headphones, which play snooze-inducing sounds to you through their padded, ventilated lug huggers – be it music, podcasts, audiobooks or things from Kokoon's own catalogue. Using an EEG sensor, they'll know when you've dropped off and will fade out, while the app monitors your sleep cycles and wakes you up again when you're not too deeply under.

US\$220 / kokoon.io

What's next?

Temporary tats with staying power

Just because you've come to regret that tribal ink you got round your upper arm when you were on your gap year in Thailand, it doesn't mean all tattoos are a bad idea. Chaotic Moon, a tech startup from Texas, has developed a temporary biotech tattoo that's capable of reading your vital signs directly from contact with your skin.

It uses electroconductive paint to send data from the sensors to a microcontroller, which then sends the info to an app over Bluetooth. They stick to the skin just like normal temporary tattoos do, using a wet flannel held over the top to activate the adhesive, which

will then wash off or peel away over the course of a day or two.

This so-called Tech Tat is able to pick up on all the signals a wearable fitness tracker would: heart rate, temperature and blood pressure. It doesn't need to be worn on the wrist, so you can hide it away under your clothes.

In a world where it often feels quicker to study for a medical degree than get an appointment to see a doctor, Chaotic Moon sees a time when Tech Tats could be worn instead, with the doctor only calling you in if an issue comes up in your results.

Chaotic Moon isn't the first company to explore the idea.



Researchers at the University of California came up with a temporary tattoo that could use sweat from your body to power other small wearable devices, and graphene has been used in combination with metallic fibre by a team in Korea to create components

so thin they can be attached to the skin as displays or health sensors.

If the idea of getting a *Deus Ex*-style augmentation or sticking magnets under your skin makes you feel a little squeamish, a Tech Tat might be a good place to start.



CREATE A DISTRACTION

Exercise is much easier if you can take your mind off it, so raise your morale with one of these tech diversions

Canal beat
Inside the ear is a great place to measure your heart rate – it doesn't move around much when you exercise.



Jabra Sport Pulse

US\$200 jabra.com

Whether you're an Eye Of The Tiger type or prefer something a little more up to date, one of the best ways to make you think about anything other than the horrific burning sensation in your legs when you exercise is to pump distracting music into your ears.

That's a job your regular headphones do perfectly adequately every day, but can they also track your heart rate? No, they cannot.

Jabra's wireless Sport Pulse headphones aren't entirely cable-free (there's one between the two buds) but they do also listen to you while you listen to them, tracking your heart rate using Jabra's Sport Life app to make sure you're working as hard as you should. The app can also record your routes using the phone's GPS, calculate how many calories you've burned, and

conduct various basic fitness tests – such as the Rockport Test, which is designed to work out your VO2 max level, and the Orthostatic Heart Rate Test, which helps you ascertain if you're working too hard or are overly stressed. A tap on the outside of the left earbud at any time will give you an update on how you're doing.

Your normal headphones are also prone to falling out while you're running, or falling to bits after continuously being drenched in your highly corrosive ear sweat, but Sport Pulse buds are rugged enough to withstand military-grade punishment from rain, sand, dust and shock, so a little bit of perspiration shouldn't be too much of a problem. There's also a mic included, so providing you're not so out of breath that you struggle to speak, you can even take handsfree calls on the go.



Price crispy
If the Sport Pulses are a bit pricey, Jabra's Sport Pace headphones (\$100) also work with the app and are just as tough. They cut chunk from the asking price, but also cut out the in-ear heart-rate monitoring. Ideal if you already have a watch or strap that takes care of it.



Button move
The left earbud of the Sport Pulses also has handy buttons to control music playback and adjust the volume, so you can turn down that Simply Red playlist before running through any busy streets or crossing any roads. Mick Hucknall has caused enough damage as it is.



Alternatively... FX-Sport VRX
They look a bit lo-fi but FX-Sport has workout guides that can be uploaded to the headphones, or you can race a virtual athlete to really test yourself.
US\$150 fx-sport.co.uk



7 Minute Superhero Workout

They say you should always be yourself, unless you can be Batman, in which case you should be Batman. 7 Minute Superhero Workout will do its best to help, turning exercises into a videogame-esque process of levelling up, using your phone camera to count reps. It supports Google Chromecast and Apple TV, for a big screen experience, but building your underground lair is entirely up to you. **US\$2.99 [Android, iOS] / superheroworkoutgame.com**

BEST FOR
BEAT-MATCHED MOTIVATION



Spotify Running

If you run using Spotify's mobile app, its Running mode can use the sensors in your phone to determine your pace and play music to match – and with a bit of help from your listening history it should pick stuff you like. Need a bit of a push to up the pace? Just knock the BPM up a notch and with any luck your legs will follow. There are even some tunes created by superstar DJ Tiesto that automatically change to match your pace as they play. **US\$10/month / spotify.com**



MyZone MZ-3

Sometimes the best way to get motivated is to introduce a bit of friendly competition – and MyZone wants to tap into that competitive streak. It awards Effort Points to each user based on how hard they work, with a sensor worn in either a chest strap or a sports bra to monitor your heart rate. Each person is given a handicap based on their maximum heart rate, so even if you don't finish first you might still win on effort. And everybody loves a tryer. **US\$150 / myzone.org**

What's next?

From flights of fancy to VR bike rides

When it's a trillion degrees outside and the sun is beating down, mercilessly frying your skin, is it really any wonder that it's hard to find the willpower to drag yourself out of bed for a run?

But what if you could fly to the moon or soar down the Grand Canyon, all with a roof over your head, giving your whole body a decent workout at the same time? That would soften the blow, right?

Icaros (USStba, icaros.net) uses a VR headset and a complicated-looking device that's like a cross between a dentist's chair and some sort of high-tech torture equipment (some might say

they're the same thing). Climb aboard and you'll need to support your body weight on your knees and forearms, shifting the contraption about in order to control movement within the game. Take a nosedive and you'll have to take the weight on your shoulder and chest muscles, while turning left and right works your abs and lower back muscles. You can make it set you a course to race around, activate battle mode (which sees you fighting off aliens) or just traverse the skies at your leisure, with a multiplayer mode in the works.

If you'd rather keep your feet on the ground (or at least a set of pedals), Widerun's VR



turbo trainer (USStba, widerun.com) uses your existing bike and teams it with a VR headset to turn the four walls of your home into... well, whatever you fancy. You can purchase worlds to download (from a picturesque autumn woodland to a Game Of

Thrones-style wintry wonderland), with your pedalling controlling how quickly you move through it. It can even respond to your steering or make it harder when you're cycling up a virtual hill. Makes a change from the inside of your garage, eh?

SMART TESTED SCALES

**Fitbit Aria**US\$120 / fitbit.com**What's the story?**

The Aria creates its own Wi-Fi hotspot to make setup seamless and sends weight, BMI and fat percentage info to your Fitbit account. It uses average weight to recognise up to eight users automatically, so your stats are safe from harm. Fitbit devices aren't compatible with Apple's HealthKit, but apps such as Sync Solver can fix that. Fitbit's iOS and Android app is pretty simplistic (the desktop version offers more detail) but it's fine for inputting calorie info and checking that you hit daily goals. It also syncs seamlessly with Fitbit's fitness monitors so, in theory, you should see a correlation.

Is it any good?

If you own a Fitbit health tracker the Aria is ideal. The combination of activity, weight and fat data builds a useful health profile and, thanks to the simple but effective smartphone apps and detailed online software, everything works seamlessly. In black or white glass, it's also the best-looking smart scale in this test (or anywhere), with a crisp, scrolling screen that displays a surprising amount of information. It takes its time to calculate and even longer to transfer data, but being wireless removes the need to have your phone on you: just hop on daily, as you would a standard set.

Tech specs

Stats tracked Weight, BMI, fat % **Battery** 6 months
Display Backlit LCD **Connectivity** Wi-Fi
Compatible products All Fitbit trackers

STUFF SAYS ★★★★☆

Thanks to the all-encompassing Fitbit ecosystem, the Aria remains the easiest way to track your vital statistics

**Withings Smart Body Analyzer WS-50**US\$130 / withings.com**What's the story?**

As well as weight, BMI and fat percentage figures, the WS-50 also records your heart rate and monitors your home's temperature and air quality. It's all automatically logged with your online account over Wi-Fi and it can sync with IFTTT. The free Health Mate app (iOS, Android) offers up a wealth of graphs and charts to help you set goals and get results, plus it's compatible with apps like Endomondo and MyFitnessPal. If you exercise more than four times a week you can switch to 'athlete' mode, which adjusts the fat percentage results to reflect your superiority over us corpulent wretches.

Is it any good?

The Withings is stylish, accurate and easy to set up, plus the app serves up motivational messages and targets to keep you stepping on. Resting heart rate is an excellent indicator of cardiovascular fitness, so being able to track changes over time should prove that the sweating is worth it. Assuming you actually do some exercise rather than just talking about it, it should become an invaluable part of your daily routine, whatever your fitness level.

Tech specs

Stats tracked Weight, BMI, fat mass, heart rate, weather, air quality **Battery** 8 months **Display** 128x64 backlit LCD **Connectivity** Wi-Fi, Bluetooth **Compatible products** Withings watches, Aura and Blood Pressure Monitor

STUFF SAYS ★★★★☆

Beautifully simple but highly effective health kit for the doughy and dynamic alike





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FLIGHT

CLUB

Last month, the creators of *Robot Wars* launched an ambitious new show in which drone pilots race and battle in a huge arena. Will Dunn visited the *Airmageddon* set for a test flight

Fight deck

The control tower gives contestants a 360° view of their precious drone being chased, flamed and shot at.

**Game of
drones**

Challenges include obstacle courses with hoops and bars to fly through, over and under.

**Hell of
'copters**

Pyrotechnics are used to make some challenges harder (and because they look cool).



THE WORD 'SHED' ISN'T ONE YOU NORMALLY ASSOCIATE WITH GLITZ AND EXCITEMENT, BUT THE CARDINGTON AIRSHIP SHEDS ARE NOT YOUR AVERAGE SHEDS.

For one thing, they're bigger than the wooden hut where you keep your lawnmower. Each shed is a single room over 800 feet long and 150 feet high. You could hide a skyscraper inside one, if you could get it to lie down (One Canada Square, the giant of London's Canary Wharf, would fit neatly into one of the sheds). We use a side entrance, because the front doors take 20 minutes to open. They are the second-largest doors in the world; only NASA, we're told, has bigger ones. And while most sheds are full of spiders and half-empty tins of paint, the shed we're going into is full of drones.

We're here for the filming of *Airmageddon*, a new show that began airing in February. It is to the kids of today what *Robot Wars* was to the previous generation: a technically advanced game show in which human operators pit their mechwarriors against each other (and a group of advanced 'house' robots) in a series of challenges and dogfights. Only this time, the robots can fly.



That's not the only difference. Unlike ground-based robots, drones move in three dimensions, and they're fast. Mistakes on the ground are fairly easy to correct, but one accidental joystick-nudge in the *Airmageddon* arena can send these powerful drones 80 feet in the air before you realise what's happening.

The competitors use large custom-built quadcopters, bigger and faster than even high-end consumer craft like DJI's Inspire 1. With the right hands on the controller they can dart around the huge space like massive dragonflies, zipping between obstacles and through hoops. They're also extremely easy to crash, as we observe within minutes as a practice flight ends with a drone zooming into a bank of lights. There's a small cheer: destruction is part of the game.

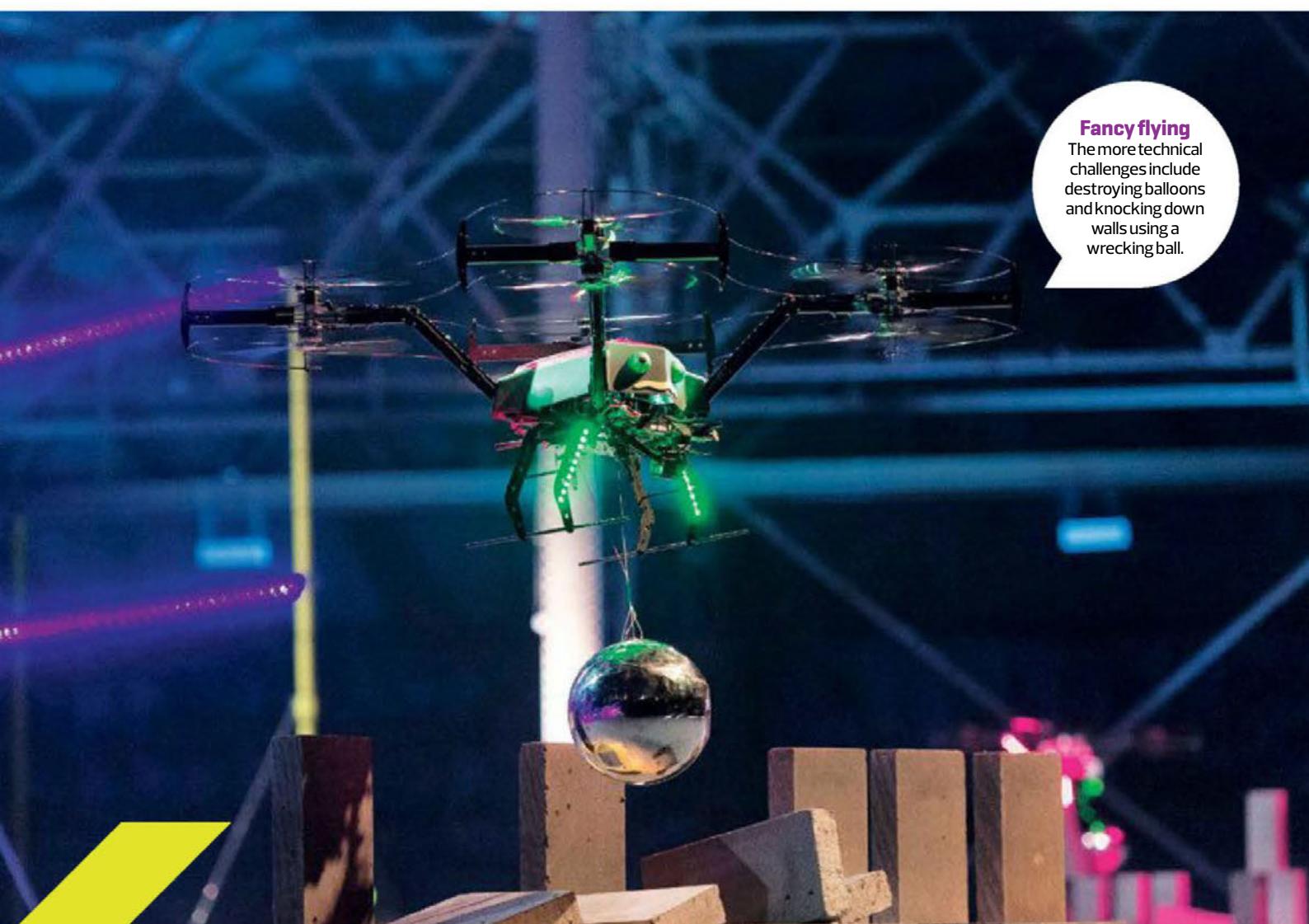
"We expect a certain amount of that," explains one of the engineers. "It's part of the suspense. The drones can smash into walls and lighting rigs, and with the pyrotechnics we have in the arena, sometimes the lithium batteries can catch fire and explode." The drones' weakness – that they're easy to crash and smash – is also one of their greatest strengths.

Before we're allowed to crash anything in the arena, though, there's basic flight training. At various points around the giant building, drones of different sizes are humming into the air, but our first flight takes place with something a bit less breakable: a tiny, kit-built quadcopter about the size of a chaffinch. The console-style controls are fairly simple but there's still quite a lot of the yoyoing motion you see when someone starts flying a drone, as they struggle to maintain a basic hover. Some flights end skittering across the floor, while others overcompensate wildly and send the tiny drones spinning away into the darkness above, lights blinking frantically as they drift out of range.

'Shroom with a view

Flying in the arena is a more serious business. The larger drones require a ground crew, complete with confusing hand gestures, a more serious controller that uses a side-mounted video monitor, and a control tower. This mushroom structure rises over 30 feet from the floor of the arena, giving *Airmageddon*'s contestants a clear view of the action while protecting them from zooming craft (and flames). The elevated platform puts you at drone height, but this is by no means easy. Two days' training is required before anyone can compete here. Flying a drone is tricky at the best of times, but in the arena there are hoops, bars, pillars, flashing lights and jets of flame. There are also other drones.

The real stars of *Robot Wars* were its house robots – Sergeant Bash, Sir Killalot and others – and the new show has its own in-house stars, built and piloted by



Fancy flying

The more technical challenges include destroying balloons and knocking down walls using a wrecking ball.

a team of eight experts. Their workshop is filled with temptations: huge tubs of paintballs, black boxes that spew fire and containers that say things like 'flamethrower nozzles'.

It's here that we meet the resident drones. The Air Marshall looks like the kind of thing that will probably be policing our streets in decades to come, while the more surreal Pig looks like something from a classic rock video. The drones everyone will be watching for are the ones that use fire. One of these is the Wasp, a 4ft-long robot insect with a tail full of explosives. At the business end of its abdomen, a mean-looking metal 'sting' is ready to rain fire on a luckless drone. Sir Killalot was the meanest mech in *Robot Wars*, and next door to the workshop, in a ventilated, fire-safe area, we find his *Airmageddon* equivalent: the Dragon. With six rotors it's a bigger, meaner drone than the rest, and it smells strongly of petrol – because, as the Dragon's pilot, Ibrahim, explains: "It shoots flames. It has a flamethrower on the front."

However menacing the house drones are, there's a long queue to be menaced by them. Over 700 kids tried out for the first series, but only 32 went through. They'll compete in teams of two – one pilot, and one

co-pilot who both acts as an extra pair of eyes and fires the drone's weapon during dogfights.

"We've kept the difficulty levels high," explains the show's producer, Steve Carsey, "but we didn't want to make it impossible. As the competitors get better, though, we'll be able to get more ambitious with the challenges. One day, if you get the telemetry and the bandwidth right, you could sit in your front room and control a drone from home. That level of technology is there now, or thereabouts, and I think in the coming years it could become an aspect of *Airmageddon*.

"For the TV show you still need competitors there, because you need the human drama as much as you need the technology. But in terms of other things you could make – why not? In virtual competitions you could have tens of thousands of kids competing from all over the world."

If Steve's right, *Airmageddon* could help video games move out of the virtual and start becoming real-world robosports. He might need an even bigger shed.

■ **Airmageddon** airs on CBBC in the UK



Guten Tag?

Tag Heuer has become first Swiss watch brand to dive into smartwatch territory with a pricey, high-end Android Wear wristputer

US\$1500 / tagheuerconnected.com

First, let's talk economics. Wait, come back! It'll be quick, and hopefully interesting. Here's why: most gadgets are 'durable goods': that's what economists call products that you buy and use for a year or so. They're competitively priced and sold in large volumes, and for manufacturers, they're a pain: making something affordable that works properly is tough.

The better option is to produce 'Veblen goods': products that are valuable because they're expensive. Barack Obama and Vladimir Putin both wear Brioni suits, which are said to be the best in the world... because they're the most expensive. The more you charge for something, the more people will want it.

The giants of Silicon Valley would dearly like to make these Veblen goods – that's why you can buy an Apple Watch Edition with an Hermès strap, and that's why Google and Intel have teamed up with Tag Heuer to make this four-figure superwatch. But is it really any better than other Android Wear ware?



1 Hard time

The design is chunky – it's 20% thicker than the Apple Watch – but the materials are premium. A titanium body and sapphire screen mean it's both light and very strong. The rubber strap is comfortable, too, but the back is cheap-feeling black plastic.

2 Jog on

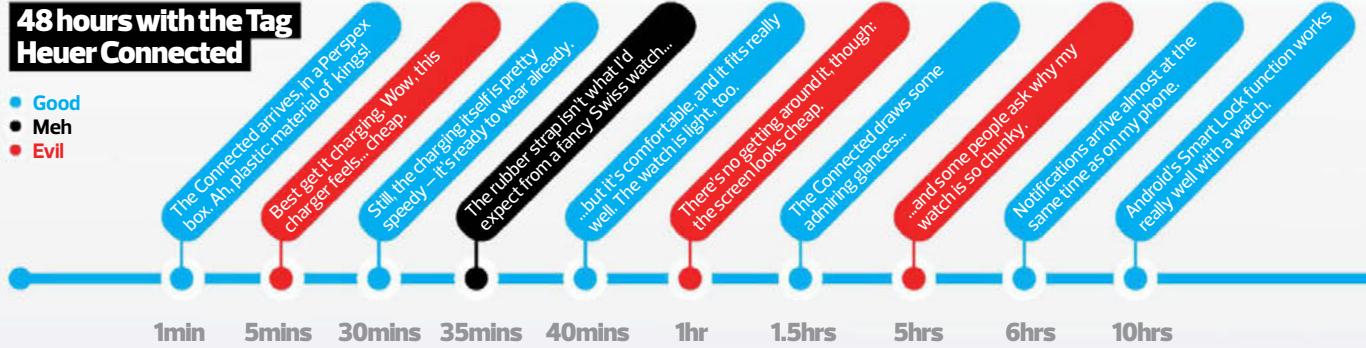
For sports, it's light, snug and durable, and Strava and Google Fit both work well. However, it's also 2.5mm thicker than Sony's Smartwatch 3. Worse still for exercise geeks, it lacks the GPS and heart-rate sensor required for proper fitness tracking.

3 On the face of it

The Connected displays a regular watch face when you're not prodding it. It looks good, if a little dim in artificial light, and it saves you from having to perform the embarrassing Smartwatch Flick Manoeuvre when you just want to know what time it is.

48 hours with the Tag Heuer Connected

- Good
- Meh
- Evil



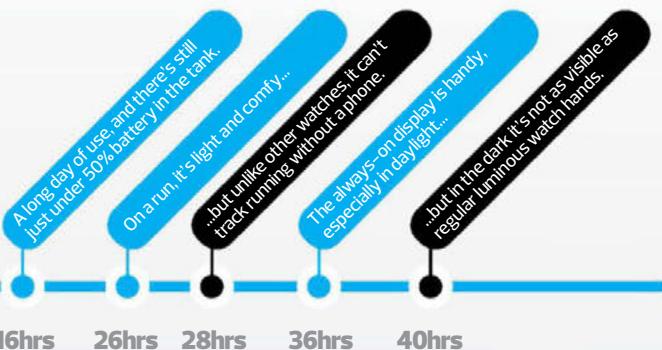


4 Display dismay

If you spent \$1500 on a phone or a TV, you'd be shocked if you could make out the pixels on its screen in normal use. The Connected's 360x360 screen has a pixel density of 240ppi. That means the screen is less sharp than an iPhone 4. Yes, the one from 2010.

5 Up and Atom

The Intel chipset is new, and seems to offer a couple of advantages. Firstly, the Bluetooth connection is very strong and reliable; and secondly, battery life is very decent: two days of regular use despite the always-on screen.



Tech specs

Screen 1.5in 360x360 LCD with multitouch
Processor 1.6GHz dual-core Intel Atom
Battery 410mAh
Storage 4GB
Dimensions 46mm diameter, 12.8mm thickness, 81g
Water/dust resistance IP67

What \$1500 buys you

Here's what you're getting for your very large pile of money – and what you can do if you don't like it



■ Exclusive faces

The custom-designed faces have small sub-displays showing alarm times or notifications, and there are exclusive stopwatch and timer apps. Overall this gives a more 'watchy' feel than other smartwatches.



■ Android Wear

Usable with iPhones as well as Androids, Google's smartwatch OS is growing in usefulness, offering customisable faces, gesture controls and voice control as well as a growing army of apps.

■ A \$1.99 USB cable

When you buy \$200-ish headphones you get woven leads, because you've paid extra. The Tag Heuer's thin, generic USB cable and plastic charging puck look like they cost pennies to make.

■ Half a new watch

If you buy a Connected and decide it isn't for you, Tag Heuer will let you part-exchange it against a watch with a real Swiss movement. It seems even Tag Heuer isn't convinced by this watch.

The Connected is not as good at fitness tracking as Intel's US\$150 Basis Peak, nor is it as stylish as Apple's US\$400 Watch Sport, and it doesn't have the nifty apps or useful battery life of the US\$250 Pebble Time Steel. Despite this, it costs at least US\$1000 more than the best smartwatches.

@willydunn

STUFF SAYS ★★★★☆

The Tag Heuer brand isn't enough to make this worth five times as much as its Android Wear rivals

App:roved

FOR
MATCHDAY
PREP

Football Manager Touch 2016

Sega's latest crack at *Football Manager* for touchscreens has gripes aplenty – the game can be sluggish and complex, includes (optional) IAP, and has match graphics that seem to have been unceremoniously wrenched from a 1995 PlayStation game. But finally you get a full, deep PC-like *Football Manager* experience – without having to lug said PC around – and one that's been suitably optimised for your tablet. Goal!

Stuff says ★★★★☆
US\$19.99 / iPad, Android

FOR
GOING
BANANAS

King Tongue

This one's not so much *Angry Birds* as angry bananas. They've revolted and declared war on the monkeys, and happen to be armed with surprisingly high-tech military kit, given that they are fruit. No matter, because your simian can strike back with what bananas fear most: a giant grappling-hook tongue that can fling both monkey and banana about the place. There's 30 levels of super-fast 1980s-style anime pinging around – bafflement awaits you.

Stuff says ★★★★☆
US\$1.99 / iOS

FOR
BUDGET
VR PICS

Cardboard Camera

You've got to hand it to Google. Whereas others crowed about bringing VR to the masses with kit that was in fact expensive, Google devised a system mostly comprised of cardboard. Now there's this app, which helps you take photos you can later relive in all their virtual glory, complete with audio. It's on a single plane only (so pretend there's nothing above or below you), but works really nicely. Good on you Google for keeping it simple for the masses.

Stuff says ★★★★☆
US\$free / Android

FOR
TROUBLE
MAKERS

Please, Don't Touch Anything

This puzzle game looks like someone tried to reimagine *The Room* on a SNES. Your colleague's on a break, leaving you sitting by a huge red button, instructed not to touch it. So, naturally, you do, and a city on the console screen explodes. Oops. More fiddling unearths secrets and new endings. Before long, you'll be emitting steam from your ears trying to figure out the cryptic solutions keeping you from your destructive goals.

Stuff says ★★★★☆
US\$4.99 / Android, iOS

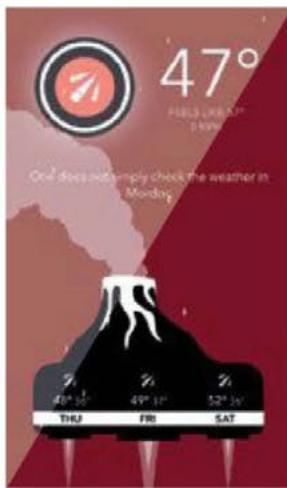


Mini meme



TAKE THE WEATHER WITH YOU

You can't rely on Michael Fish any more, so arm yourself with these excellent forecasting apps to never get caught short without a brolly (or shades) again



Carrot Weather

If you're bored with sensible, practical forecasts, install Carrot for added snark. A tetchy, malevolent AI dishes out twisted animations along with rainfall and temperature predictions. You can store multiple locations (past, present and future) and discover secret places, but take care to never poke Carrot's ocular sensor!

Stuff says ★★★★☆
US\$3.99 / iOS



Dark Sky

The app that kicked off hyper-local forecasting, Dark Sky remains a must-have download. Swipe between a rainfall radar, today's forecast and predictions for the week ahead. If the app errs, submit a forecast. And there are custom notifications, so your iPhone will bug you when it's about to chuck it down.

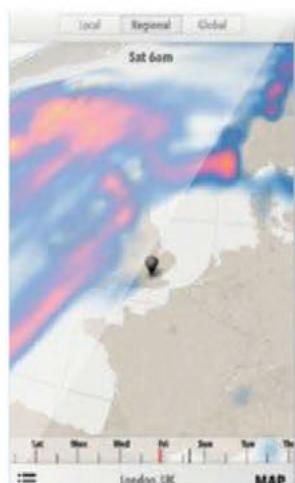
Stuff says ★★★★☆
US\$3.99 / iOS



Gismeteo

On Android devices, there's a tendency towards clutter in many weather apps. Gismeteo is a simpler affair, displaying forecast details above imagery illustrating current conditions. If you're a bit nosey (who isn't?), nearby weather stations and towns are automatically listed, and you can see what's going on at those locations.

Stuff says ★★★★☆
US\$free / Android



Forecast

A sort of Dark Sky online, forecast.io is a website you save to your device's home screen as a web app. It's less swish than a native app, and we found map access finicky on some Android devices, but it's otherwise the best bet for mobile cheapskates, what with it being smart, accurate and of course free.

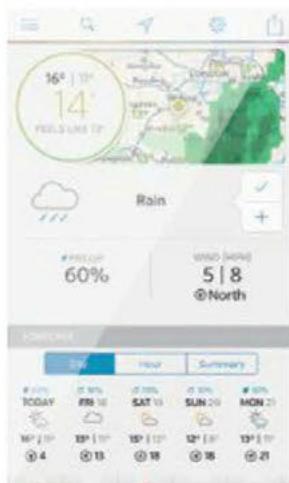
Stuff says ★★★★☆
US\$free / all platforms



The Weather Channel

From an app standpoint, The Weather Channel is best described as adequate – and ad-infested. But if you're only properly fulfilled when an actual human delivers a weather forecast, this app is packed with videos. Just don't blame us when you soon buy a new Subaru.

Stuff says ★★★★☆
US\$free / Android, iOS, Windows Phone



Weather Underground

The best app for weather fanatics who aren't satisfied until stuffed full of data, Weather Underground is info-packed but also configurable. Its sections can be reordered, there are some great and varied widgets for Android, and Apple Watch owners get actually worthwhile forecasts on their wrists.

Stuff says ★★★★☆
from US\$free / Android, iOS

Pred alert

Why those spiky angles and bits of red? This Android tablet is built for gaming, and isn't afraid to show it

US\$300 / acer.com

■ This is a tablet companion to Acer's big bruiser gaming laptops and desktops. Despite its striking look, the Predator 8 is slim and feels pretty light... but not everyone's going to love it. There are too many sharp points that will weigh into your palm. It ticks a lot of nerd boxes, though, such as its expandable 32GB storage.

■ Most low-cost tablets use screens that can't really tap deep into the colour spectrum, but the Predator 8 looks pretty vivid. This screen punchiness is provided more by colour than contrast, due to its ColorBlast technology.

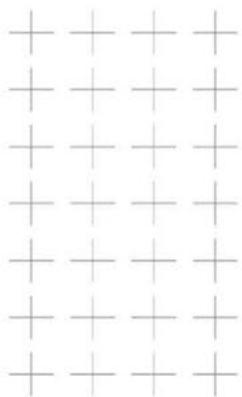
■ There are four powerful speakers, two each side. They'll certainly be better, and louder, than those of your phone. You won't have to worry about blocking them off with your hands either. Nice work, Acer.

■ For demanding 3D titles, the Predator 8 has a new Intel Atom x7-Z8700 quad-core 1.6GHz brain. *Dead Effect 2* runs perfectly; *Dead Trigger 2* shows a weird bloom effect bug but performance is fine, even at 'high' visual setting.

■ *Asphalt 8* shows this tablet up a bit, however. Switching over to the max graphics setting available, there are serious frame rate drops when you get close to rival racers. The haptic feedback on show in this game is pretty neat, though.

Tech specs

Screen 8in 1920x1200
Processor 1.6GHz quad-core Intel Atom x7-Z8700
Storage 32GB (microSD expandable up to 128GB)
RAM 2GB
OS Android Lollipop
Battery life 8 hours
Cameras 5MP rear, 2MP front
Dimensions 22x13x0.8cm, 350g



■ Portable power

As usual, Intel packs a lot of punch into each of its cores. This scores 2400 points on Geekbench 3, matching mid-range Qualcomm CPUs. The Nvidia Shield K1 scores around 3600 points, though.

■ Got any more juice?

The Acer's battery life is pretty standard. Playing a looped 720p MP4 video, the Predator 8 lasts for 7 hours 45 minutes. It's not bad, but a bit of a shrug-your-shoulders result.

STUFF SAYS Some great added features, but rivals offer a better core experience ★★★★☆

This Acer's game... but it has some seriously strong rivals

Andrew Williams

This is a gaming tablet, with some features that suit that remit down to the ground. A quad-speaker array is worth shouting about and the haptic feedback is a nice, if not essential, bonus. The colour-saturated screen makes games look pretty lively. But a few surprising performance issues let it down a bit. The iPad Mini 2 has a much sharper screen, and for a bit less cash there's the more powerful Nvidia Shield Tablet K1.

4 OF THE BEST

iPhone 7-ready headphones

Our sources say Apple plans to scrap the headphone port on the iPhone 7, so we've rounded up the best wire-free cans



1 B&W P5 Wireless US\$400 bowers-wilkins.com

Who's playing?

What do you get if you cross Bowers & Wilkins' successful P5 Series 2 headphones with Bluetooth functionality? The P5 Wireless, of course. Or, as we've dubbed them, the Bentley of wireless headphones.

They're the brand's first foray into wireless cans, and we haven't seen a better debut since Frank Darabont directed *The Shawshank Redemption*. If these 'phones look

luxurious, it's because they are. There's a strong, twisted-aluminium headband; cushy, sheep-leather-coated earpads; and compact, rounded earcups, that hide 40mm drivers and a hidden socket for wired use when the promised 17 hours have been drained.

Your ears may get a little toasty during a transatlantic flight, but the pads cling onto your head firmly enough to take

the occasional headbang (we couldn't help it while playing Massive Attack's *Angel*).

Sound good?

If you like your sound authoritative, dynamic and subtle (and who doesn't?), you'll feel right at home with the P5 Wireless.

With the solidity and weight to handle any *sturm und drang*, the B&Ws tear through synth sounds with the determination of a lion

with a steak between its chops. Basslines are taut and deep, and sweeping dynamics give a welcome impression of power. In Leonard Cohen's *Suzanne*, the strain intended in his brooding vocal is plain to hear.

Tech specs

Weight 214g • **Claimed battery life** 17 hours • **Colours** Black only • **Cable length** 1.2m • **Charging** microUSB

STUFF SAYS Luxury for your ears both inside and out: B&W have ditched the wires triumphantly ★★★★



2 JBL Everest 100 US\$80 / [jbl.com](#)

Who's playing?

About the size of pear drops, JBL's wireless buds are all about fuss-free fit. You don't have to waste time wiggling them around: just pop them in and a small hook helps them nuzzle in your ear (three sizes of ear tips help too). As unshakeable as rivals with wraparound hooks? Maybe not – the Everest 100s aren't sweatproof or waterproof, so be wary on wet days.

Still, they have a more discreet design – in subdued white or black – and are easier

to put in and out if your gossipy 'mate' on the bus keeps butting in. An in-line remote for hands-free calls and Bluetooth pairing hangs just below your cheek so you won't ever be fumbling around for it.

Sound good?

These are not exactly the Roadrunner of in-ears: not quite as quick on the draw or punctual as we'd like. Their eight-hour battery life will help get you through the daily grind, though, and the sound is one you could easily listen to for that

long... if you don't mind your music on the meaty side.

When Jack Garratt drops his electro beats and wobbling synths in *Worry*, the JBLs dig down deep, bass hogging the limelight. This lends a weighty hand to the rest of the sound so it exudes confidence, handling Muse's *The 2nd Law* with its head held high.

Tech specs

- **Weight** 16g
- **Claimed battery life** 8 hours
- **Colours** Black, white
- **Cable length** n/a
- **Charging** microUSB

STUFF SAYS Mountainous-sounding buds with the emphasis on the bass **★★★★☆**

3 AKG Y50BT US\$220 / [akg.com](#)

Who's playing?

If anything shows how the standard of wireless cans has evolved from ape to human in recent years, it's the AKG Y50BTs. These booming beauties are proof that you don't have to pay lots for great wireless sound and are easily good enough to pass for a solid wired performance.

While the branding is slightly more subdued than the Y50s, it won't be up everyone's street. The dapper blue, black and silver foldable finishes will be, though. Gorgeous. Buttons

for volume, play/pause and power/pairing nestle into the right ear cup. This intuitive layout doesn't require the permanent carrying of a pocket mirror; before long, you'll be reaching for the right button without hesitation.

Sound good?

These are no slouch in the sound department. They serve up loads of detail, and a cleaner, more agile listen than our past faves, the Philips M2BTs. They walk through Belle & Sebastian's *Nobody's Empire*

with a skip in their step and show their knack for rhythm with Macklemore & Ryan Lewis's *Can't Hold Us*.

A full charge promises 20 hours of juice, although a flat battery doesn't mean game over: the cable lets you carry on listening, which is a slightly more refined experience, if not quite as powerful.

Tech specs

- **Weight** 190g
- **Claimed battery life** 20 hours
- **Colours** Black, silver, blue
- **Cable length** 1.2m
- **Charging** microUSB

STUFF SAYS Proof that good wireless sound doesn't have to cost the earth **★★★★★**

4 Beats Powerbeats2 Wireless US\$200 / [beatsbydre.com](#)

Who's playing?

Raise your hand if you've ever had buds fall out of your ears during exercise. Us too. Beats sympathises, and has come up with these sport-friendly in-ears. Bluetooth playback means no wires (except for the discreet one linking the buds together), and ear hooks make sure they stay put.

They're also featherweights (a pinky-liftable 24g) and are sweat- and water-resistant (though we probably wouldn't swim lengths wearing them). The hard shell case, the size

of a large pebble, won't take up much room in your sports bag.

Sound good?

Getting us in the mood is *Survivor's Eye Of The Tiger* (if it's good enough for Rocky...) and the Powerbeats2s bask in the brand's signature sound: show-stealingly rich bass and clear vocals. They have the energy to take the punchbag baseline right to you, and the knockout riff will kick you into gear on the treadmill.

We would gladly trade some of that aggression for an ounce

of finesse and subtlety, though – both of which are nowhere to be seen. Highs lack detail and sparkle. A case of good but not good enough? You betcha.

For US\$200 – the price of a six-month gym membership – we'd take our chances with a less bank-breaking, more sound-centric pair.

Tech specs

- **Weight** 24g
- **Claimed battery life** 6 hours
- **Colours** 10 options
- **Cable length** n/a
- **Charging** microUSB

STUFF SAYS Gym-friendly, but average sound makes them too big-ticket **★★★★☆**



iPHONE 7: WHAT TO EXPECT

Circular screen? Built-in nail clippers? A faint smell of prawns? No...

● Thin, but choosy

Apparently we'll pay for a smaller waistline by having no standard 3.5mm headphone jack. It seems ludicrous, but multiple rumours have all pointed the same way. So users will be forced to switch to cans with a Lightning connector... or wireless ones such as those on test here.

● Why, 2K?

Screen resolution could finally bump up to 2K, matching Android rivals. Whispers of 4K have flitted around, but we reckon that's ambitious. What we can guarantee is the return of 3D Touch, hopefully with more applications.

● More muscles

Surprise surprise, this will be Apple's most powerful handset yet, reportedly thanks to a new A10 processor. Expect increased grunt for games and apps.

● A sharper eye

While the 12MP resolution is expected to remain, we'd love to see optical image stabilisation land on the regular 4.7in model. That's not too much to ask... is it, Apple?

PS4, PC / streetfighter.com

Street Fighter V

Fireballs at the ready – Capcom's grandaddy of all-action combat games is back

Do you know your shoryukens from your spinning piledrivers? *Street Fighter* drew up the blueprint for fighting games back in the '80s and has been the biggest name on the scene ever since.

This latest entry isn't a complete series reboot like *Third Strike*, and doesn't have an overflowing roster and frame-perfect execution like *SF IV*. It's somewhere in the middle, with a streamlined 16 characters making it the perfect entry for fighting game scrubs, but with enough new mechanics that anyone raised on quarter-circle motions and hadoukens will feel right at home.

Street Fighter IV's Focus attack is gone; now there's a whole new set of motions to build into your muscle memory. Each character has a V-skill defensive ability, and V-trigger offensive moves that can be pulled off once you've filled your V-Gauge. It sounds V-confusing,

but after a few rounds it all starts to click into place.

Those rounds go fast, too. Every attack hits hard, and it only takes a few to the face before you're seeing stars. The stun gauge returns from *Third Strike*, so you can tell if your next move will dizzy your opponent – leaving them wide open to a screen-filling Critical Art attack.

The arcade mode won't keep you busy for long; it's got some beautiful hand-drawn cut scenes, but you'll blow through it in about ten minutes per character. Capcom's working on a more in-depth story mode, set to arrive in July as free DLC.

But this brawler's all about notching up victories, either online or face to face in 'versus' mode. The feeling you get from outsmarting your opponent, anticipating their attack and countering it to take the game, is what's kept me playing *Street Fighter* games for decades – and it's only grown stronger here.

Tom Morgan



Practise your very best gurn before each fight to put off your opponent.



Play as the new electricity-wielding Laura, or classic muscular fighter Ryu.

STUFF SAYS More evolution than revolution, but *Street Fighter* is still king of the brawl ★★★★☆



XCOM 2

The long-awaited sequel to *XCOM: Enemy Unknown* has arrived on PC, but can it live up to that game's level of adulation... or even surpass it?

In multiplayer mode you and a friend can go head to head in tactical turn-based battles.



XCOM 2 adds a variety of maps and missions, refining an already winning formula.



As with the 2012 original, *XCOM 2* pits you against an alien menace, but this time around you're a rag-tag resistance group struggling to wrestle the planet back from the aliens running Earth in the guise of benevolent protectors.

In fact, they're engaged in a nefarious scheme known as the Avatar Project. The specific details are revealed over the course of the campaign but, suffice to say, should it reach its intended goals, it's curtains for humanity.

In true *XCOM* fashion, this struggle plays out in two distinct fashions. Firstly, there's an overarching strategic layer in which you build and maintain a base (a giant repurposed alien battleship), train soldiers and upgrade equipment.

The game's other layer is its turn-based mission mode, in which you control troops on a 3D map, completing objectives and fighting alien units. This will push your tactical thinking to its limits – not to mention your composure. Over the past few days, I suspect

my neighbours have heard plenty of X-rated language emanating from my living room as my troops miss easy shots, fail to reach an evoc point by a single tile, or die in any number of ways.

Yes, *XCOM 2* is very hard. Even seasoned players may want to start out on the easiest mode, at least until they're familiar with the changes... all of which are positive. For instance, your squad will mostly start in concealment, meaning you can sneak into great tactical positions before triggering an ambush.

Mission maps are procedurally generated now, which keeps the game fresh. I can definitely see myself playing through the campaign multiple times... if I ever manage to complete it.

But while the difficulty is high, I wouldn't call it unfair. Everything you need to succeed is laid out – you just need to learn how it all works. When you do succeed, every one of those expletive-spattered massacres you went through will have been worth it.

Sam Kieldsen

STUFF SAYS *XCOM 2* improves on its beloved predecessor in almost every way ★★★★★

Media hoard

Hop on the back of *Stuff's* word-bike for a thrilling ride through the Atlanta underworld, an unexpected indie reinvention and, if you can handle the excitement, a book about fonts

WATCH

Triple 9 cinema

In America, 999 doesn't just call the police, it summons the whole force. That's because 999 isn't a phone number; it's code for 'officer down' – and when you need to cause a distraction in order to pull off the heist of a lifetime, there's no better way to do it.

That's the conceit at the core of John Hillcoat's gritty thriller. A gang of cops under the thumb of the Russian mafia (led in don't-mess-with-me-or-I'll-have-your-teeth-pulled-out fashion by an almost unrecognisable Kate Winslet) must preoccupy the Atlanta PD for long enough to retrieve a package that'll get the mob off their back for good.

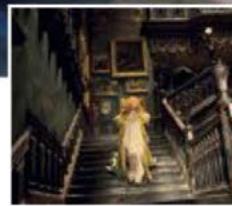
Exactly why they're in debt to the Russians, or how exactly the

heist will help them, is only vaguely explored, but gang member Marcus's new partner, straight-shooting Chris (Casey Affleck), looks like the ideal sacrifice. The premise isn't a million miles from the pilot of *The Shield* – and that's no bad thing.

It's hardly the most original film you'll see all year, but things don't unfold in quite the way you might expect; and while it perhaps relies too heavily on adding dead bodies for plot development, the set pieces are more Michael Mann than Michael Bay. Watch out for a show-stealing turn from Michael K Williams (Omar in *The Wire*) as a cross-dressing informant.

Tom Wiggins

STUFF SAYS ★★★★☆



Crimson Peak

Blu-ray, DVD, VOD

Mexico's master of horror Guillermo Del Toro swaps the giant robots of *Pacific Rim* for a ghost story. After marrying an inventor, aspiring author Edith (Mia Wasikowska) encounters baddies both living and dead in a wonderfully imagined old mansion. Fans of *The Shining* will find a lot to love here, if not much that's new.

Tom Wiggins

STUFF SAYS ★★★★☆



The Walk

Blu-ray, DVD, VOD

The Walk tells the same tale as 2008's excellent *Man On Wire*, but its big-budget, CGI-assisted reconstruction of Philippe Petit's tightrope walk high above the streets of New York is significantly more vertigo-inducing. One of few films that's enhanced by watching it in 3D, *The Walk* has moments that are as tense as Petit's wire.

Tom Wiggins

STUFF SAYS ★★★★☆

LISTEN



Hymns_Bloc Party

Half of the original Bloc Party line-up has gone, but with a new rhythm section joining Kele Okereke and guitarist Russell Lissack, the London four-piece also has a new sound to go with its new look.

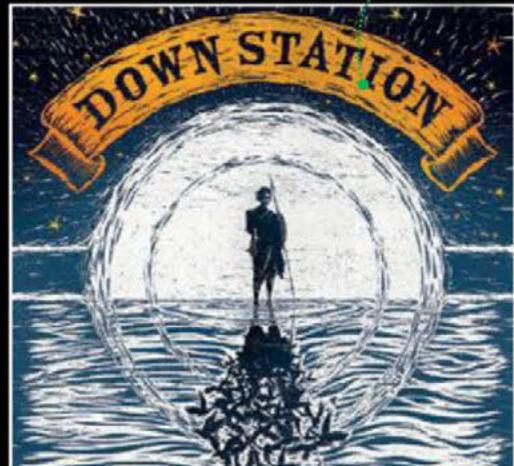
While the band always enjoyed a dollop of synth, you'd be forgiven for thinking it was Lissack they'd dumped as there's that little here that sounds like a guitar. *Hymns* is all sub-bass and dubstep

sirens (possibly a few years too late), although Okereke insists his fellow founder used his six-string to make all kinds of noises during recording.

If it was the band's post-punk revival sound that drew you to them then *Hymns* probably won't please you, but you certainly can't accuse Bloc Party of standing still.

Tom Wiggins

STUFF SAYS ★★★☆☆



Down Station_Simon Morden

Have you read Philip José Farmer's *To Your Scattered Bodies Go*? What do you mean, no? It would help if you had, because then I could explain that *Down Station* starts in a roughly similar way, with a group of characters suddenly placed in a mysterious world that could be an alien planet, the afterlife, or something stranger still.

The first chapter is a brilliantly claustrophobic exercise in impending

disaster. A bunch of Tube workers run from a huge fire, caused by a cataclysmic event on the surface, until they find a door deep underground. Beyond the door is the sea, and the sky, and a sunlit beach. They pass through, and the door disappears behind them. What follows is magical, violent and thrilling in equal measure.

Will Dunn

STUFF SAYS ★★★★☆



Stranger Things_Yuck

Yuck have long been inspired by the artful scuzz of Dinosaur Jr and Sonic Youth, and little has changed on their third record. *Stranger Things* ploughs its way through this noisy niche with joyful aplomb. *Hold Me Closer* kicks up an anthemic fuss, and what this record lacks in originality it makes up for in rickety glee.

Rob Leedham

STUFF SAYS ★★★☆☆



Don't You_Wet

As this year's standard bearers for the alt-pop zeitgeist, Wet blend lovelorn indie with crackling R'n'B to swooning effect. Their debut album is full of songs that swell with elegant anguish. With a slew of understated bangers to hand, like *Deadwater* and *Don't Wanna Be Your Girl*, they've got their own graceful grasp on heartbreak.

Rob Leedham

STUFF SAYS ★★★★☆



Why Fonts Matter_Sarah Hyndman

These reviews are typed in Prelo Medium, and of course you respect their effortless wit and infallible authority. But would you feel the same way if they flounced across the page in *Noteworthy Light? Or belched at you in Marker Felt Wide?* No. And that's why fonts matter. This book says that, but with pictures.

Richard Purvis

STUFF SAYS ★★★★☆



Sinclair ZX Spectrum: A Visual Compendium_ed. Steve Jarratt

Whether you prefer this to last year's Commodore edition might depend on which machine you had as a kid. We like this one, not just because it features ex-Stuffman Tony Horgan, but because of its insights into some classic games.

Tom Wiggins

STUFF SAYS ★★★★☆



GUITAR

That axe you bought a decade ago looks great leaning against the bedroom wall, but wouldn't it look even better being played? Martyn Casserly tells you where to start

THE BASICS

■ Find a teacher. As useful as YouTube is, nothing beats having someone experienced guiding you and correcting technique issues early on. Check the Registry of Guitar Tutors (rgt.org) to find a local instructor.

■ Choose the right axe. Feel is important, so visit a shop and play a few until you find one you like. If you want to play heavier styles, make sure it has humbucker pickups.

■ Go unplugged. We're talking mostly about electric guitar here, but by all means start out with



a cheap acoustic – it's easier to move from one of those to an electric than the other way round.

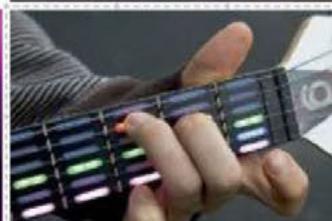
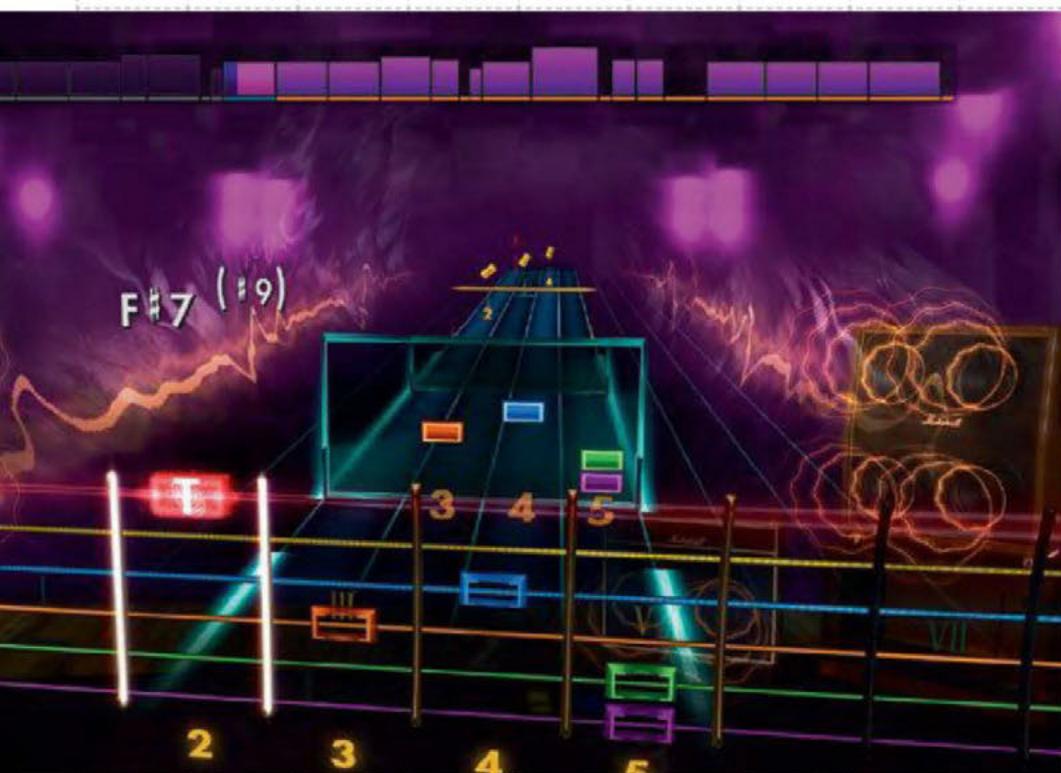
■ Practice makes perfect. You need to develop finger strength and muscle memory. Start by playing for 15–30 minutes each day, then gradually increase the length of the sessions.

■ Slow down. Trying to learn songs at full speed can be

frustrating. Instead, play them much slower, building up the tempo as you master the fingering patterns.

■ Invest in a tuner. Initially, it can be hard to hear if your guitar is correctly tuned. A device like the Snark clip-on tuner (US\$12, amazon.com) will help a lot. Or treat yourself to a polyphonic tuner like the TC PolyTune 2 (US\$80, amazon.com).

■ String theory. Guitar strings are metal and degrade over time, making them less comfortable to play. Changing them regularly will save your fingers as well as preventing the sound from becoming dull.



TECH TUTORS

■ Learn the language. Knowledge of chords and scales is the backbone of any guitar god. Guitar Toolkit's (US\$2.99 / iOS) interactive menus show you where to put your fingers.

■ Timing is key. Use YouTube backing tracks to develop solid rhythm. Or get a metronome app and practice playing to different tempos.

■ Get a smart guitar. The gTar (US\$700, gtar.fm) uses your iPhone to control LEDs embedded in the fretboard, showing you which notes to play during practice exercises.



SOUND CHOICES

■ **Quiet riot.** Electric guitars need an amp to bring them alive. A low-watt valve model such as Blackstar's HT-5 combo (\$500, blackstaramps.com) will keep you cool with the neighbours.

■ **Model behaviour.** Digital modelling amps offer a wide range of tones. Yamaha's compact THR amps (above) also double as hi-fi speakers.

■ **Be effective.** FX pedals increase your sonic options. From standalone stompboxes from Boss to multi-effect units like the Line 6 Firehawk (\$450, line6.com), all will add depth.

DIGGING DEEPER

■ **Develop your vocabulary.** As you improve, you'll also want to extend your repertoire. Riffstation (US\$35, riffstation.com) is a great tool that breaks down tracks so you can easily learn the lead and rhythm parts.

■ **Gamify your playing.** Make practising chords more fun by using RockSmith (US\$60, rocksmith.ubi.com) on your PC or console. It's *Guitar Hero* but with a real instrument.

■ **Practise everywhere.** The Jamstik (US\$300, jamstik.com) is a portable guitar-neck that gives you on-screen feedback.

FOR THE RECORD

■ **Get it down.** Hearing yourself play is an invaluable way to chart progress. Try jamming along to a track while using a voice memo app.

■ **Create a track.** When writing a song, good recording software with loops and drum patterns can make it fast and fun. GarageBand US\$free, Mac) and Mixcraft 7 (from US\$50, PC) are both excellent choices.

■ **Share your work.** Open a free account on soundcloud.com, load up the track, then let your friends know that you're now a fully fledged musician.

LEVEL UP WITH...



THE YOUTUBE CHANNEL
TRUEFIRE
youtube.com/user/TrueFireTV

There is an incredible amount of free content and tips on YouTube, but one top-notch channel is TrueFire. It hosts a vast array of professionally recorded vids, covering a wide range of genres. Paid memberships are also available on truefire.com, with dedicated style courses such as Rusty Cooley's 'Lickopedia'.



THE MOVIE
IT MIGHT GET LOUD
US\$10 / iTunes, Amazon Instant Video

To understand the guitar, it's always helpful to see and hear how the great players approach the instrument. In this documentary *The Edge, Jack White and Jimmy Page* meet for a jamming session to discuss their influences and different playing styles. It includes some unintentional pointers on how to do a great guitar face.



THE APP
ONSONG
US\$19.99 / iOS

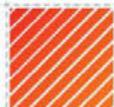
Bedroom guitarists used to keep their song sheets in a folder marked 'shredulation', but it's all a bit antiquated when OnSong can hold thousands of docs on your iPad instead. Not only that, but the app also lets you instantly transpose the chords, resize the text, share set lists with other OnSong users nearby, and use MIDI foot pedals to turn the pages.



PLAYLIST

ANTIHERO FILMS

From Walter White to Frank Underwood, the hit shows of recent years prove we love flawed characters... and they don't get much more flawed than the ones in these movies

**Mad Max: Fury Road**

The reboot is as bonkers as us fans of the originals could have hoped, but while Max isn't exactly an antihero, Charlize Theron's Furiosa certainly is. The first in command of nasty Immortan Joe's war rig and overseer of horrific acts against his "five wives", she eventually turns against the overlord.

**The Crow**

It may not have aged incredibly well, but *The Crow* remains a cult classic. Brought back from the dead so he can avenge his own murder and that of his wife, Eric Draven (played by Brandon Lee, who was accidentally shot and killed during filming) dons clown makeup and goes on a rampage of anti-heroic proportions.

Aguirre, The Wrath Of God

Klaus Kinski comes across as a terrifying nutjob in all the films he made with director Werner Herzog; this is because Klaus Kinski was a terrifying nutjob (read his repulsive autobiography if you dare). In *Aguirre* he plays a conquistador in search of El Dorado. One of the great films of the '70s.

Leon: The Professional

Luc Besson's masterpiece, featuring the monastic hitman or 'cleaner' Léon Montana, is neo-noir film at its finest. When her family is killed by a corrupt agent, he reluctantly takes in his 12-year-old neighbour. He then trains her to be competent with an arsenal of weapons. Just a big softy, really.

John Wick

Mr Wick used to be a very bad man – a tattooed assassin for the nastiest of nasty gangsters, "the guy you send to kill the boogeyman". But then he found love and hung up his shooting fingers. Inevitably, his quiet life goes wrong. Cue retaliation in the form of some of the finest gunplay committed to screen in years.

Birdman

Birdman is about a jaded divorcee with delusions of artistic grandeur. He used to look good in Lycra, but now he can't even take care of his daughter. Played with schizophrenic finesse by Michael Keaton, this superhero-inspired flick takes gleeful aim at a man who's incapable of saving himself, let alone anyone else.

Falling Down

We join the recently unemployed William Foster in a gridlocked traffic jam. It sends him spiralling into a cathartic, *GTA*-style rampage across early '90s LA. Nothing escapes his wrath, whether it's a payphone, a self-entitled golfer or, most memorably, a fast food restaurant that refuses to serve him all-day breakfast.



TROPE OPERA



ANTI-VILLAIN

The anti-villain is an antagonist who isn't entirely unsympathetic. They may have a moral code that lifts them above being pure evil. Or, like Hannibal Lecter, some are very charming.

See: *Harvey Dent, The Dark Knight*



MANIC PIXIE DREAM GIRL

Coined by film critic Nathan Rabin, who describes the MPDG as "that bubbly, shallow cinematic creature that exists solely to teach broodingly soulful young men to embrace life".

See: *Sam, Garden State*



Dead Man's Shoes
Shane Meadows' tale set in a sleepy Derbyshire town sees Paddy Considine's Richard target a gang for tormenting his brother. He plays the ex-squaddie with all the terror of a real-life slasher baddie, sneaking into their homes wearing a creepy gas mask and stalking them with a terrifying you-can't-scare-me intensity.



Dallas Buyers Club
Ron Woodroof is a nasty, homophobic hell-raiser, the kind of guy you wouldn't want to share a drink with, let alone root for as he takes on the might of US law. But after being infected with AIDS, everything changes for the Texas ne'er-do-well turned pharmaceutical businessman. As does your affection for him.



Mesrine
Vincent Cassel tiptoes the line between charming and loathsome in this horribly compelling two-part biopic of French ultra-thug Jacques Mesrine. His hobbies: armed robbery, kidnapping, brutal murder... you may be left sceptical of his self-image as a misunderstood Robin Hood figure.



Kill Bill
The lack of anti-heroines here has clearly made Beatrix Kiddo angry – Tarantino has been talking up the possibility of a third film. Which is a great excuse to rewatch her tracksuited travails against the Deadly Viper Assassination Squad, which were inspired by the (also excellent) film *Lady Snowblood*.



WOOKIE

The classic Wookie is a suffering character who elicits a strong nurturing or protective response in the viewer. In other words, they demand to be wrapped in a blanket and fed cookies.

See: *Wall-E, Wall-E*

SUPER GEEK



HEADPHONE AMPS

Ever think your digital music could do with an adrenaline shot? What Hi-Fi? editor Simon Lucas introduces the DAC/amp combos that will bring your tunes back to life...

For all that I'm pretty much obliged to fetishise the virtues of vinyl as a music storage format, I still have the bulk of my tunes (20,000 or so) stored on various iPods, laptops, smartphones and external hard drives. I love digital music for the same reason everybody else does: convenience. No matter where I am, I have a wealth of music at my fingertips – and that's before I get all coy about how much money I spend on streaming services.

There's a big elephant in the digital audio room, though, and

that's sound quality. Compressing CD-sized, 16bit/44.1kHz files down to an iTunes-comparable 256kbps allows plenty of memory for more, but also emasculates the quality. And even if you do the right thing (by which I mean rip your CDs as FLAC files, subscribe to Tidal and download hi-res files from the likes of tracks.technics.com), your digital equipment is seldom optimised for sound.

Converting digital files to analogue information that your ears, speakers and headphones can understand is an absolutely

crucial process if you're interested in sound quality. But computers are no better at this than they are at doing the triple jump.

So, the sensible listener takes this huge responsibility away from their standard hardware and hands it over to an amplifier with a dedicated digital-to-analogue converter. The rise in digital music in all its guises has led to a corresponding rise in the number, variety, cost and capability of DAC/amp combos – but what's for sure is that a built-for-purpose DAC will allow your digital music to sound far

better than when running through a chip in your phone or laptop.

Whether it's for portable use, a desktop system or a full-fat hi-fi system, a dedicated DAC/amp will make a big difference, even if your music library is mostly bog-standard iTunes files rather than 'lossless' FLACs and WAVs. They will liberate all the detail, low-end weight, texture, dynamic variance and character of digital music that your devices are incapable of revealing. Don't just take my word for it. Have a quick listen, because a quick listen is all it needs.

JARGON BUSTER

SAMPLING RATE

The number of times a portion of digital audio information is examined per second in order to eliminate discrepancies. CD has a sampling rate of 44.1kHz, so each piece of information is examined and compared 44,100 times per second.

HIGH RESOLUTION

Without getting bogged down, the digital info on a CD can be expressed as 16bit/44.1kHz. High-res audio is considered to be at least 24bit/96kHz – this means more detail and greater dynamic range.

OPEN/CLOSED BACK
Closed-back cans have a relatively narrow sound but very little leaking. Open-back ones give a much airier, more spacious sound... but those around you 'enjoy' your music too.

IMPEDANCE The amount of resistance the headphones present to the headphone amp, and thus the amount of power it needs to drive them to a given volume.



SMART PHONE BOOSTER

HRT DSP/AKG Y50

It comes on like a bog-standard USB key, but the HRT dSp is a little plastic box of delights. It's ready to put a sonic rocket up any music stored on Android phones, tablets or laptops (there's an i-dSp variant with Lightning connector) and will handle files from grubby MP3s to shiny 24/96 FLAC. It sniffs out far greater detail, and is a much more dynamic listen than even the best-sounding smartphone. Teamed with a pair of AKG's supernaturally gifted Y50s, the HRT makes your smartphone alone sound like it's playing underwater.

US\$70 / highresolutiontechnologies.com
US\$70 / akg.com

HANDY ALL-ROUNDER

CHORD MOJO / SENNHEISER MOMENTUM 2.0 OVER-EARS

Though more businesslike than the HRT, the Chord Mojo is still pretty portable – not that much bigger than Apple's lumpy iPhone battery case. And while it'll do wonders for your sound, the Mojo's so accomplished it'll boost proper systems costing thousands. Take the DAC work away from a pricey laptop, give it to the Mojo and you'll hear greater depth and punch, more fine detail, altogether more realism... and at a dizzy 768kHz sampling rate. Then plug in some Momentum 2.0s and get that wide-open sound all to yourself.

US\$600 / chordelectronics.co.uk
US\$350 / sennheiser.com



COPLAND DA215 / BOWERS & WILKINS P7

How seriously do you take your digital audio? Because if you're really serious about it – and we mean you have a special listening chair surrounded by soundproofed walls – high-end Danish hi-fi sensualist Copland has you covered for both sound and design. Bringing some old-school valve technology to bear on your hard-drive tunes, the Copland DA215 is not performing a digital-to-analogue conversion so much as an audio resurrection – and all the while looking ready to have a loft apartment built around it. Perfect, really, for a pair of lushly comfortable and sonically impeccable sheepskin leather Bowers & Wilkins P7s to be plugged straight in.

US\$2500 / copland.dk

US\$400 / bowers-wilkins.co.uk

DESKTOP POWER HOUSE

LISTEN TO THIS



JOHN GRANT GREY TICKLES, BLACK PRESSURE

Thanks to its mix of a wide-open soundstage, squelchy analogue synthesizer sounds and four-square rhythms and tempos, *Grey Tickles, Black Pressure* is a great test of the digital-to-analogue process. All of the machinery and metallic arrangements should sound human, and they can if they're delivered properly.



KENDRICK LAMAR TO PIMP A BUTTERFLY

An absolutely withering low-frequency attack and some of the most mannered, idiosyncratic vocals ever recorded make this a brilliant across-the-board test for your new setup (if not exactly background cooking music). Thumping beats mixed with judicious mid-70s afro-funk samples make for an absorbing listen that's right up there with 2015's best.



TORRES SPINTER
Midway between vulnerable *ingénue*, avenging harpy and indie experimentalist, Torres puts the sort of light and shade into her soundscape-cum-power-pop attack that an inferior smartphone DAC would ignore. Listen to *A Proper Polish Welcome* to see how easy it is to pick apart the layers once the conversion has been done by a talented amp/DAC combo.



5-MINUTE HACKS

IF NOTHING ELSE, AT LEAST...

1



1 TAKE A VR PHOTO

Your friends have always appreciated your sun lounger holiday snaps – who doesn't love hotdog legs? Now they can marvel at how nice your Spanish villa is in 360°, with some help from Google Cardboard:

1. Get some goggles. Firstly, make sure you or your photo recipient has a VR viewer for their Android phone. Either buy one from google.com/get/ cardboard or, if you're handy with scissors, build one yourself from the site's instructions.

2. Take your VR snap. Download Cardboard Camera (US\$free, Android), press the camera icon and turn around slowly, just like you would when taking a panoramic photo. Touch the equaliser icon to record some sound as well.

3. Share your holiday. There's no sharing option within the app, so here's how to send the photo to your friends: export it from your camera roll, email or share it using Google Drive, and ask them to look in Cardboard Camera gallery.

2 GET BARGAIN ZONAL HEATING

Smart, zonal heating systems like Honeywell's EVOHOME can be a bit dear. But if you just want to manage the temperature of individual rooms without the smartphone control, try these little radiator buddies:

1. Get a controller. The Pegler Terrier i-Temp (US\$40, screwfix.com) comes in both vertical and horizontal versions and screws on in place of your radiator's thermostatic radiator valve (TRV) head.

2. Choose a programme. Insert a couple of AA batteries and either choose a preset programme or enter your own. Its custom plans let you choose specific times and temperatures for each day of the week.

3. Rad-ify your radiator. Now just unscrew your radiator's TRV head and replace it with your i-Temp, taking care not to cross-thread its plastic fixing ring. You are now a certified heating genius.

2



3 BECOME A STREAMING GOD

While streaming boxes figure out how to do 'universal search', this handy app can tell you which on-demand services have that film you've got a craving to watch:

1. Go to JustWatch. To find where you can watch a specific film or TV show, use the search box at justwatch.com to find which services are streaming it and where you can download it from.

2. Get the app. Download the JustWatch app (US\$free / iOS, Android), and compile a cross-platform 'watch list'.

3. Do not disturb. Trying to decide between horror movies? ReelScary (reelscary.com) has handy pie chart breakdowns of how films rate for gore, suspense and 'disturb'. For maximum terror, go for the three films that rate the highest in each.

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HOT BUY

1

**Samsung Galaxy S6**

This is a new era for Samsung, with a smart upgrade that fixes not just things that were amiss in the Galaxy S5, but things that have plagued them for years. No plastic here: its front and back are super-tough Gorilla Glass 4, its sides aluminium. In terms of ergonomics and speaker quality, HTC still wins, but only just. And in the more important areas of camera performance, screen tech and raw power, the Galaxy S6 tramples its rival. We just wish it had a microSD slot.

STUFF SAYS

Samsung has proven its critics wrong – the Galaxy S6 is the new benchmark for flagship phones

from US\$700

2

**Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge+**

The Edge+ is a larger version of the curvy S6 Edge that wowed us earlier this year; its extra chunk of screen and camera are terrific, while it's also technologically superior to almost everything out there. For a money-no-object phone, it's an absolute corker.

from
US\$820

BEST FOR
CUTTING-EDGE GADGETEERS

3

**LG G4**

The leather-clad LG G4 is a treat for those who want something that looks and feels a bit different. Its camera is incredibly powerful, giving you almost as much control as a DSLR, and the large screen is brilliant... but the battery life holds it back from the top.

US\$760

4

**Apple iPhone 6s**

"Everything's changed" is pushing it, but within the 6s's familiar body lies a surprising amount of innovation. You'll really notice the A9 processor's added speed, the 12MP camera's scope and quality, and of course, the time-saving delight that is 3D Touch.

from
US\$650

5

**OnePlus 2**

The second OnePlus phone massively undercuts the big names with performance, software and battery life that far exceed some of the \$600-odd competition. The only thing that might put you off is simply how much of a pain the OnePlus 2 is to get hold of.

from
US\$570

6

**HTC One M9+**

Having been beaten by the S6, the M9+ is the step forward that perhaps the M9 should have been. With a bigger, more pixel-packed screen and a fingerprint scanner it's welcome at the next-gen superphone party, and it's dressed just as smartly as before.

US\$710

7

**OnePlus X**

A super-value phone that sets a new standard among sub-\$300 mobiles. Its design and performance are sound, with no sign of 'cheapness'. The only real issue is that the OnePlus 2 only costs a bit more – with a more versatile camera and realistic colours.

US\$250

8

**Sony Xperia Z5 Dual**

Do a higher-megapixel camera and neat fingerprint scanner revitalise this Sony? Nearly but not quite. This is a very good and attractive phone, but its price seems steep when it has no killer feature to offer over other Android kings.

US\$680

9

**Sony Xperia Z5 Compact**

This snatches the 'small phone, big specs' baton from the Z3 Compact with ease. It has an updated processor and apes the Z5's battery life. The fingerprint scanner is great, but a sluggish camera and only 720p screen mean it has plenty of cheaper competition.

US\$630

10

**BlackBerry Priv**

BlackBerry's first Android handset stands out from every other current smartphone thanks to its unique design and physical keyboard. It's a capable powerhouse, and the shortcut functionality alone should be enough to tempt avid multitaskers.

US\$700

FOR THE FULL REVIEWS AND OUR SMARTPHONE BUYING GUIDE, VISIT STUFF.TV/ME



mophie.

The 3rd generation of
high-performance power
mophie powerstation®

Ultra thin, quick charging external batteries with universal compatibility

Available from 2.000 mAh up-to 15.000 mAh
Charge everything



HOT BUY		1	Apple iPad Air 2	STUFF SAYS	
1			The iPad Air didn't really need to be thinner, but that doesn't mean 6.1mm isn't mighty impressive. This combines with reassuring weight and impeccable build quality to make this the most desirable tab on the planet. While the display is the same Retina resolution as before, clever screen tech brings the pixels closer to the surface, and the whole experience is even faster than before thanks to the new A8X chip. Basically it's the best tablet in the world made even better.	from US\$500	★★★★★
2			Apple iPad Mini 4 This is the mini tab we've been waiting for. It's 1.4mm thinner and 32g lighter, just the right size for a great portable entertainment hub, and subtle display tweaks will do justice to games and graphic novels alike. Plus it will easily last three days on a charge.	from US\$400	★★★★★
3			Sony Xperia Z4 Tablet Sony have added a keyboard to this already stunning tab, so now it's handy for work as well as play, just like a Windows hybrid. Superb battery life, plenty of power, a slim body and super-vivid screen make this the best Android alternative to an iPad Air 2.	from US\$700	★★★★★
4			Samsung Galaxy Tab S2 9.7 Slimmer and faster, with a brilliant screen and serious stamina, the Galaxy Tab S2 sees Samsung back in the running for the Android throne. The Xperia Z4 just pips it with its bundled keyboard, but the S2's a versatile, big-screen tab first and foremost.	US\$495	★★★★★
5			Microsoft Surface Pro 3 At last, Microsoft has delivered on the promise of the tablet-cum-laptop hybrid. It proves there's space in the world for a design that's more productive than an iPad or Galaxy Note, but easier to hump around than a traditional laptop.	from US\$800	★★★★★
6			Asus Transformer Book T100 Chi While it may sit in the middle of 10in hybrid range on price, the Transformer Book T100 Chi is classier than the average tablet. Improvements to design, screen and keyboard quality make it a neat choice if you don't mind working with a small screen.	US\$400	★★★★★
7			Google Nexus 9 The design isn't as pristine, but this is a real Android contender to rival the iPads. You get the new Android 5.0 Lollipop software, bags of power and a super-sharp display. With 12 hours of video play and two front-facing speakers, it'll be a great film buddy.	US\$400	★★★★★
8			Apple iPad Pro Apple's tablet colossus, the supercharged iPad Pro, is for serious creatives with deep pockets: the perfect digital coffee-table book that just about doubles as a laptop. To make best use of all that screen, remember to also buy a Smart Keyboard and Pencil.	US\$700	★★★★★
9			Microsoft Surface 3 Microsoft finally nailed the hybrid formula with the Surface Pro 3, and now it's translated it to this: a smart, ultra-portable design with the benefits of full Windows 8.1. It's easily the best affordable Surface yet. Just make sure you buy the keyboard.	US\$480	★★★★★
10			Nvidia Shield Tablet This really is the ultimate gaming tablet. The Shield's sheer power and gaming smarts are incredible, with a console-quality controller and the option of seamless streaming from your PC. All it needs now is more made-for-Shield games...lots more.	US\$300	★★★★★

□ FOR THE FULL REVIEWS AND OUR TABLET BUYING GUIDE, POINT YOUR CLICKER AT STUFF.TV/ME

(*) **speck**

Protect. Organize. Mobilize.

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HOT BUY

1



Sonos multiroom system

Who needs to drill holes and re-plaster walls to get a multiroom music system? Not you. With Sonos, you can expand your set-up at your leisure – why not start with a budget Play:3, and add a bigger Play:5 later? Then maybe hook up a Connect to your existing hi-fi and router, then add speakers to a Connect:Amp in another room, or a SUB for a bass boost. You'll run out of rooms before you run out of options. For a further upgrade, the Arcam rSeries SonLink DAC works a treat with the Connect.

STUFF SAYS

Infinite music in every room without the need for custom installers? Sign us up now, please from US\$750 ★★★★

2



Naim Mu-so

US\$1,400 for a wireless speaker?! Well yes, but what a wireless speaker it is. Naim has ploughed all of its high-end hi-fi experience into delivering a beautifully made, great-sounding device with AirPlay, Spotify Connect and aptX Bluetooth all on-board.

US\$1,400
★★★★★

BEST FOR
ONE-BOX
WI-FI HI-FI

3



Monitor Audio Airstream S200

It may look a bit like a floppy skyscraper, but the Monitor Audio's Bluetooth-plus-AirPlay speaker makes a lot of sense, mostly because it takes up very little shelf/desk/table space but makes loads of lovely noise. It's a bit of a steal at £200.

US\$300
★★★★★

BEST FOR
PICNIC PARTIES

4



Cambridge Audio Go

There are loads of very cheap Bluetooth speakers out there, but we reckon it's worth spending that little bit more to get something that's really good – and that's the Go. It sounds awesome, it's really nicely built and its battery lasts a massive 18 hours.

US\$180
★★★★★

5



Bluesound multiroom System

Fancy a bit of Sonos-style multiroom but with better-than-CD-quality sound thrown in? You want a Bluesound. There are all-in-one speakers, adapters for your existing hi-fi, and a Vault that rips and stores all your CDs. All can handle high-resolution audio.

from
US\$620
★★★★★

6



Libratone Zipp

A fuzzy, cylindrical, colourful Airplay dock that will deliver detailed, punchy 360-degree sound anywhere at all, thanks to a built-in battery that gives it four hours of outdoors life. Direct Wi-Fi skills free you from cables, routers, and everything but the boogie.

US\$505
★★★★★

BEST FOR
AL FRESCO
PARTIES

7



Philips Fidelio E5

Setting up a 5.1 home theatre can be a daunting task. Figuring which speakers to pair with which receiver and laying down metres of unsightly cable. This wireless setup from Philips takes the mess out of surround sound, stripping out the clutter.

US\$780
★★★★★

8



Audio Pro Addon T10

Available in orange, white or black, the Addon T10 is a Bluetooth speaker that also has analogue inputs and a USB socket for charging your MP3 player. Sound-wise it's punchy and deep, with just a little too much bass. It sounds best in orange, obviously.

US\$420
★★★★★

9



Beats Pill

Beats transformed the headphone market, and now they're at it again with portable hi-fi. The Beats Pill impresses with simple controls, slender stylings and solid build. It goes impressively loud for its size, minus the booming base of its headphone counterparts.

US\$200
★★★★★

BEST FOR
BLASTING
TUNES ON
THE GO

10



Sony NWZ-ZX1

The latest Walkman is a premium high-res audio player, and it's the best-sounding portable device we've ever heard: you'll notice parts of songs you never knew were there. We're not so keen on the high price and lack of expandable storage, though.

US\$920
★★★★★

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Ministry of Sound Audio Bluetooth and Wi-Fi Connect Speaker Range

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Available at all leading retailers

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1		Apple MacBook Pro 13in (2015) Apple hasn't changed too many parts of the MacBook Pro for 2015. There's a fancy new trackpad and the latest generation of Intel CPUs, which deliver better stamina as well as a chunk more power. This is an incremental upgrade, but given how good the Pro already was, that's more than enough to keep it right at the top of the laptop honours list. If you need power as well as stamina and portability, this is one of the best laptops money can buy.	STUFF SAYS If it ain't broke... it hasn't radically changed, but the Pro's performance and trackpad are top of its class from US\$1,300 ★★★★★
2		Dell XPS 13 (2015) The original XPS 13 was already a great lightweight laptop, but now Dell has given it a Windows 10 refresh. If the last one was the thinking person's ultrabook, this is that and a whole lot more. With better battery life and performance, it's hard to beat.	from US\$800 ★★★★★
3		Asus ZenBook UX305 Asus knows what it's doing. It knows that the Apple MacBook Air laptops are treading water and the ZenBook UX305 is pretty much everything the 2015 Air should have been, with its fetching aluminium design and as good a display as any US\$1000 laptop.	from US\$1,100 ★★★★★
4		Microsoft Surface Pro 3 At last, Microsoft has delivered on the promise of the tablet-cum-laptop hybrid. It proves there's space in the world for a design that's more productive than an iPad or Galaxy Note, but easier to hump around than a traditional laptop.	from US\$930 (with Type Cover) ★★★★★
5		Alienware 17 A brute of a machine in every way, the Alienware 17 weighs as much as four MacBook Airs and probably frags harder than 10 of them. Core i7 Haswell processor at 3.4GHz, Nvidia GeForce graphics, up to 32GB of RAM... Our trigger finger's already itching.	from US\$2,150 ★★★★★
6		Apple MacBook (2015) This is no 'Air', nor 'Pro': a clear sign that this is what Apple sees as the future of the ultraportable laptop. And it's certainly very desirable: a 12in lean machine with a superb screen and haptic touchpad. However, the lack of ports can be frustrating.	from US\$1,300 ★★★★★
7		Lenovo Yoga Pro 3 The third entry in the Yoga Pro line refines the laptop/tablet hybrid design with a power-sipping new Intel Core M processor plus slimness and style to make even the MacBook Air look worried. And you can stand it up like a tent. If you want.	US\$1,900 ★★★★★
8		Apple MacBook Air 13in (2015) Apple is scraping by with pretty much the same Air design as before. You get a new processor, new connectors and slightly improved battery life, but still no Retina screen. However, if a portable road warrior is what you're after, this is still a great choice.	from US\$1,000 ★★★★★
9		Acer Aspire Switch 10 With a 10.1in HD 1280x800 screen, Intel Atom innards, eight hours of battery and compact form factor, this flexible hybrid is for anyone who dreams of MacBook they can pull apart. Excellent for both writing your next novel or watching cat videos on YouTube.	US\$410 ★★★★★
10		HP Envy 6 Sleekbook AMD Trinity processors power this Ultrabook alternative, making it cheaper and more battery-filled. The Envy 6 has a quality metal lid and rubberised base, 15.6in screen, and its 6GB RAM gives the 500GB hard drive faster boot times than a similar Intel core i3.	US\$660 ★★★★★

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MONSTER
DIGITAL

HOT BUY

1

**LG 65EG960T**

We knew that one day OLED and 4K would be joined in matrimony, and that the results would be rather special. That day is now upon us and 'special' doesn't quite do it justice. The 65in LG is the new pinnacle of TV tech and performance, combining the unbelievable colours, contrast and brightness of OLED with the super-sharp, ultra-detailed images of 4K to create a picture that's more real and enticing than looking out of the window.

STUFF SAYS

It's might pricey, but if you're after the finest flatscreen known to man, this is currently it.

US\$13,600 ★★★★★

2

**LG 55EC930T**

Not everyone's got \$13,000 to blow on a flatscreen, and if you have to choose between OLED and 4K it's OLED we'd take right now. The awesome colours, super-deep blacks and amazing contrast will make everything you already watch look extra-amazing.

US\$2,900

★★★★★

3

**Samsung UE65JU7000**

If you're going to go 4K, best do it big. Samsung's latest 65in Ultra HD offering is a beauty with the screen on or off, and the open-source Tizen UI is very snazzy. The processor and inputs are still in a separate little unit than can be upgraded in the future.

US\$4,300

★★★★★

4

**Samsung UE55JS8000**

Each of its 8.3million pixels is put to good use, filling the screen's handsome real estate with pin-sharp outlines, potent contrast and eye-popping colours. Sound-wise, it's way more powerful than bog-standard flatscreens. Worth the pretty penny? Oh yes.

US\$4,100

★★★★★

5

**Sony KDL-50W800B**

4K a bit too new-fangled (or pricey) for you? How about a 50in edge-lit LED LCD with all of Sony's smart features for well under a grand? It's not even like picture quality's been sacrificed – this is an absolute corker of a telly in every way.

US\$700

★★★★★

BEST FOR AFFORDABLE BRILLIANCE

6

**LG 55UF950T**

This telly comes to life in a flash, and menus don't waste time loading – it's a glossy double-page advert for pixel-packing 4K technology. The punchy palette revels in dazzling hues, deep blacks and Essex-smile whites, and the sound is solid.

US\$1,900

★★★★★

BEST FOR A SMALLER SCREEN

7

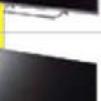
**Sony KDL-32W700B**

There's nothing wrong with sticking with a smaller TV, but you should still make sure you pick a good'un. This 32in Sony is the best, in terms of both picture performance and features, which include 1080p resolution and all the smart stuff you can handle.

US\$450

★★★★★

8

**Sony KD-55X8500B**

If you want to jump on the 4K bandwagon with Sony you could go for the wedge-shaped X9, which is great, but we'd suggest that this slimmer, less intrusive 'entry-level' 55-inch is an even better buy. It's still got all the smart stuff and great performance.

US\$2,000

★★★★★

9

**LG 55LA860W**

From its super-slim, near bezel-less design to its excellent picture and clever, app-stuffed smart TV hub, the 860W does many things right. Then again, it costs two grand, so it damn well should do. If you've got deep pockets, you could do a lot worse.

US\$3,000

★★★★★

10

**Bang & Olufsen BeoVision 11**

Five grand for a 40in TV might seem a trifle steep, but if that's small change to you the BeoVision 11 is a luxurious delight of design and 1080p picture quality. It also sounds better than any TV we've ever used, and has a built-in surround processor for adding 5.1.

US\$5,000

★★★★★

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HOT BUY		1	AKG K451	STUFF SAYS
1			They've actually been around a little while now, but what put the K451 on-ears back on to our radar was an official price drop from US\$220 to US\$130, and a real-world price of just US\$100. For that money they're unbeatable – awesomely agile and punchy sound wrapped up in a subtly stylish and foldable design. Add both standard and three-button control cables for maximising compatibility and there's practically no excuse for not getting brilliant sound.	Fantastic sound and great portability at an almost unbeatable price: the perfect PMP upgrade US\$100 ★★★★★
2			Bowers & Wilkins P5 Series 2 Even the most demanding audio buff would find it hard to fault these – B&W have delivered a pair of premium on-ears that look, feel and sound exquisite. You control playback and volume with your iPhone, while feeling like a VIP guest at an intimate gig.	US\$300 ★★★★★
3			B&O BeoPlay H8 Headphones are now inescapably objects of fashion. Objects that say things about their wearers, such as 'I admire the style of the superstar DJ' or 'I'm refined and tasteful in a Danish sort of way'. If the latter applies to you, you'll love the wireless H8s.	US\$500 ★★★★★
4			Philips Fidelio M1 Mkl Your commute deserves a quality soundtrack, and second-generation Fidelio M1 headphones give you precisely that. There's oodles of detail to the sound and they punch harder than the Hulk. Beats and their ilk can't touch them.	US\$280 ★★★★★
5			Sony MDR-EX650AP If you're prepared to pay a little extra for your in-ears, these Sonys are even better than the SoundMagics above. The sound is that bit bigger, a little more detailed and a little more grown-up, and if you don't like the brass finish there's a silver version.	US\$90 ★★★★★
6			SoundMagic E10S This is actually the third version of SoundMagic's awesome, affordable in-ears – not that you'd tell by looking. They sound even better, though: a little smoother and more refined, with tight, weighty bass. Plus there's now a mic and button for smartphone use.	US\$40 ★★★★★
7			Bose QuietComfort 25 The best kind of silence is the kind you then fill with sweet, sweet music, and that's what the QuietComfort 25s give you. The active noise-cancelling quells office hubbub, air-conditioning and aeroplane hum, and delivers cracking sound in its place.	US\$260 ★★★★★
8			Sol Republic Master Tracks Really tough things are usually really ugly, which is why the lovely styling of the 'virtually indestructible' Master Tracks headphones is so refreshing. Loud, punchy, fast and controlled, the sound is just as attractive as the design. Worth every penny.	US\$200 ★★★★★
9			AKG Y50 The bright colour options (they're available in yellow, teal and red, as well as black) and massive logo have a slight try-hard feel about them, but the Y50s make up for it by sounding loads better than the more 'street' on-ear headphones out there.	US\$90 ★★★★★
10			Sennheiser Momentum Classily styled, cushion-comfortable and smooth-sounding, the Momentums are the perfect over-ears for the dapper man about town. There's also an on-ear version, smaller and barely half the price, available in pink, blue, green, brown and, um, 'ivory'.	US\$200 ★★★★★

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SLRs

HOT BUY	1	Fujifilm X-T10 For rich landscapes, detailed macro shots, stunningly sharp portraits and everyday photos, the X-T10 beats most other choices at any price. It also handles beautifully and can be paired with some of the most consistently superb lenses you'll ever find.	US\$900 (body only) ★★★★★	
	2	Sony A7R II Yes, it's expensive, but the A7R II combines impeccable build quality with a class-leading full-frame sensor, 5-axis image stabilisation, huge ISO range, super-fast autofocus, an excellent viewfinder and 4K video recording. Simply the finest Sony camera ever made.	US\$3200 (body only) ★★★★★	
	3	Canon EOS 5DS A fantastic piece of kit that any pixel-peeping DSLR owner will get heaps of enjoyment out of. The astounding 50MP sensor puts an incredible amount of pictorial detail at your fingertips, and the 5DS is very much pitched as Canon's ultimate stills camera.	US\$3700 (body only) ★★★★★	
	4	Sony A6000 Sony's new system camera may be tiny but it packs a big photographic punch. There may be no optical image stabilisation but the incredible speed and accuracy of the A6000's autofocus is a real highlight, as is its large, clear electronic viewfinder.	US\$550 (body only) ★★★★★	BEST FOR ALL-ROUND VALUE
	5	Olympus OM-D E-M5 MkII A number of upgrades make this tempting even for existing E-M5 owners. It's just as attractive if you're looking for your first advanced camera, or jumping from a lower-specced model – it's solid but highly portable, and the images are gorgeous.	USA\$1000 (body only) ★★★★★	

COMPACT CAMERAS

HOT BUY	1	Sony Cyber-shot HX60V The HX60V is a top-class all-rounder, the Ian Botham of snappers. Few cameras offer this level of versatility in such a lightweight package: a 30x optical zoom lens, 1080p video, manual controls and GPS for tagging... plus NFC and Wi-Fi for cable-free sharing.	US\$300 ★★★★★	BEST FOR TAKING ON HOLIDAY
	2	Sony DSC-RX100 IV The RX100 IV is a superb premium point-and-shoot that offers all the versatility, flexibility and dependable all-round performance you could need. And while you may hesitate at the price, no other current pocket-sized camera can best it.	US\$950 ★★★★★	BEST FOR POCKETABLE POWER
	3	Panasonic Lumix LX100 This is one the most capable premium compacts on the market – and the LX100's 4K capabilities give it a crucial edge over its rivals. HD video capture and superb stills performance make the Panasonic a star performer when it comes to the basics too.	US\$700 ★★★★★	
	4	Nikon Coolpix S7000 If small and light is the way you need to go, you can jam the affordable S7000 in your jeans and you won't even know it's there. Yet it still packs a 20x optical zoom and back-illuminated 16MP sensor, as well as 4-axis image stabilisation and Wi-Fi.	US\$180 ★★★★★	
	5	Sony RX10 II Sporting a memory-attached sensor, this camera has the ability to record video at 1000fps or stills at 1/32,000 of a second – speeds usually reserved for pro kit. As an all-rounder with a non-interchangeable lens, there's no other model that can touch it.	US\$1300 ★★★★★	

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NEXT BIG THING?



AR SUPERHELPERS

I know how to change my engine oil, thanks...

Well, apart from that time you accidentally poured oil into the coolant tank and had to spend all Saturday flushing the radiator. Anyway, for many people, a car is a giant Rubik's Cube on wheels. Below the bonnet is a confusing bowl of pipe spaghetti, and dashboards may as well be written in hieroglyphics. You could read the manual, of course, but no-one has time for that nonsense, so Hyundai's saving its drivers the hassle with a new augmented reality app called Virtual Guide.

Is this where you try to persuade me to wear some stupid computer glasses?

Nope, this is for your here-and-now iOS or Android phone. Download the app, point your smartphone or tablet at a Hyundai engine or interior, and it'll overlay guides, diagrams and videos onto the relevant part using 3D tracking tech. At the moment it's focused on basics like brake fluid, engine oil and fuseboxes, but there's no reason it can't grow into a virtual mechanic. You may not fancy replacing your suspension, but it would be nice to know what that weird new warning light means – and how to stop it.

It would, but then it would be a lot easier if dashboards were designed for humans.

Don't pretend you don't want your car to feel like a fighter plane cockpit, with mysterious buttons to discover then completely ignore. Anyway, this is a sign that AR is finally maturing and becoming useful. Just think what other DIY holes such apps could get you out of – figuring out your misbehaving fusebox at home or, like Microsoft's HoloLens demo, getting a remote plumber to help fix your sink. When smart glasses become so cheap that they come free with a box of Shreddies, we'll all be queuing up to be glassholes.

Words Mark Wilson

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3050

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What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision, Awards 2015

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